



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Robots gather in the Comox Valley for a STEM competition**

For immediate release

9 January 2019

**COMOX VALLEY, B.C.** – The Valley will witness the return of the annual robotics tournament that will bring 50 high school teams together to compete at the regional level Saturday 19 January at Highland Secondary.

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year hosting the VEX Robotics Regional Tournament, students from across Vancouver Island and the lower mainland will participate in an all-day competition in hopes to earn a spot at the provincial level taking place in March.

VEX Robotics Competitions are the largest and fastest growing middle school and high school robotics program globally with more than 50 countries participating in over 1,700 competitions worldwide.

Each year, an exciting engineering challenge is presented to robotic students in the form of a game. Students are challenged to build innovative robots to take into tournaments where they can showcase excellence in mechanical design, engineering and robotic handling skills.

Eighteen teams representing G.P. Vanier Secondary, Mark R. Isfeld Secondary and NIDES, competed in 2018 with four teams (two from Isfeld and two from NIDES) advancing to the provincial level. For the first time, two teams represented by NIDES - Navigators 7842F and 7842B - qualified for the world championship with team 7842F capturing the Build Award for creativity and innovation.

Vex Robotics is a global movement to enhance and revolutionize STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. Robotic competitions teach students to problem solve through healthy events that encourage important life skills including teamwork, communications, critical thinking and project management.

Teams that successfully advance to the provincial level following the January tournament can earn the opportunity to compete at the global level. The 2019 world championship will be held in Louisiana, Kentucky in April. Two teams from the Valley have already successfully secured an invite to the provincials due to their strong performance at tournaments in fall 2018.

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Robotics is offered as an extra curricular activity. The district provides robotic education within the curriculum through the NIDES ENTER program (Grades 6 - 9) at Aspen Elementary and Highland Secondary. Robotics/electronics classes are taught at Highland, Isfeld and Vanier.

District educators Steve Claassen, Roger Vernon, Jim Tattrie, Dawson Ross, Randy Grey, Stew Savard, and John Gair have continued to provide tremendous leadership supporting VEX Robotics and teaching robotic skills to district secondary students.

VEX Robotic students advancing to tournaments raise money for travel through fundraising efforts including bagging groceries, bottle drives and with tremendous support from Parent Advisory Councils (PAC). The community has graciously supported teams with sponsorship affording students the opportunity to participate in tournaments and to purchase robot parts.

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**Note to Editors:** Media and the public are welcome and encouraged to attend to support local secondary robotics students. Competition commences at 9:30 a.m. and runs until 3:30 p.m. Interview opportunities with district educators and students can be arranged in advance of or during the competition.

To see the game description for the VEX Robotics Competition, *Turning Point* visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDDGBcs0TFM&feature=youtu.be>

To learn more about Robotics Education visit <https://www.roboticseducation.org/>

**Image (Source NIDES):**

Navigators 7842F, NIDES Vex Robotics team, earned the Design Award for engineering and the Navigators 7842B received a high skills score at a tournament in Burnaby in October earning both teams an invite to provincial competition in March. This is the first time for both teams to secure an automatic invite so early in the season. Images and more information available at <https://www.facebook.com/nides7842/>

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