

Malavya Shah
Woodie Flowers Finalist Award Essay (2019)

The single most important factor to success is passion. A truly successful mentor in FIRST is not just passionate about STEM; they instill a passion within every person they meet. Every day, for the past 12 years, Malavya Shah has inspired us through innovative learning and continuous improvement.

Malavya takes Team 1241 further by teaching new skills and instilling confidence. Using prior university and professional experience, he developed design workshops for the team that introduce advanced CAD and industry-level engineering concepts to students. He also played a significant part in team standardization through a playbook, a step-by-step guide for the team to follow throughout the season. These efforts have implemented a sustainable structure within our team. This structure provides opportunities and encourages students to become involved with robot design processes and perform at a higher level. Being competitive pushes our students and gives them confidence to be independent leaders. Malavya's contributions have made it so our team can apply our knowledge in a student driven environment.

Malavya is well known in the FIRST community because he believes it is important to give back. For more than 5 years, he has been an avid volunteer for FIRST events, including the tournament director for our annual FLL Tournament. He has also been conducting workshops at FRC conferences. This is due to his passion for STEM and robotics. FIRST inspired Malavya to excel at STEM, creating memorable experiences that he aims to share with others. Through FLL mentorship, he has built long lasting relationships with kids who are able to approach him for guidance outside of the team. Malavya uses and builds upon FIRST because he recognizes its power as a tool to create positive change.

Malavya furthers outreach by using his teaching ability to create equitable learning environments. He developed a curriculum for free STEM workshops in libraries across Ontario, which has been adopted by FIRST. He helped expand this curriculum to places as far as Zimbabwe. He also created STEM workshops to help integrate newcomer youth in Canada, such as Syrian refugees. These curriculums inspired the creation of the Holland Bloorview Rehabilitation Robotics Program to meet the needs of children with physical and mental health barriers. All this exemplifies his teaching ability as he adapts to the different challenges posed in the education system in order to create equity in STEM. The passion Malavya possesses to accomplish these initiatives reflects upon his aspirations to become a teacher after experiencing the value of mentorship in FIRST.

Malavya creates a lasting impact on everyone he meets by revolutionizing the course of learning and inspiring others to use their passion as a drive for change. This, and so much more, is what makes Malavya Shah an extraordinary friend, mentor and life-long teacher - for over 78 000 hours and counting.