



2025-2026

Student Handbook

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About FIRST

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is a nonprofit founded in 1989 by inventor Dean Kamen to inspire young people in science and technology. Through programs like the FIRST Robotics Competition and FIRST LEGO League, it engages students in STEM from elementary through high school. Learn more at firstinspires.org.

About FRC

The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is FIRST's flagship program, challenging high school students with a rigorous engineering project while building leadership, teamwork, and project management skills. Each year, over 3,000 teams—ranging in size and supported by mentors—design and build a robot for a game revealed in January.

Philosophies of FIRST

FIRST promotes Gracious Professionalism and Coopertition®—encouraging teams to compete intensely while showing kindness, fairness, and support to all, including opponents. Collaboration and learning remain central, even in competition.

About LASA Robotics

LASA Robotics brings together passionate students to collaborate, innovate, and develop lasting technical and leadership skills. Through teamwork, mentorship, and community engagement, we create a supportive environment where students grow both personally and professionally.

About Purple Haze & Purple Rain

LASA Robotics includes two FRC teams: Purple Haze 418 and Purple Rain 436. Team 418 emphasizes advanced technical execution and competition performance, while Team 436 offers a low-pressure space for newer members to explore subteams, build foundational skills, and step into leadership roles. This dual-team structure broadens access, supports student-led learning, and empowers all members to thrive.

Mission Statement & Vision

LASA Robotics fosters growth through mentorship and experiential learning, empowering a community where students can lead and collaborate with confidence.

This handbook is subject to change at any time at the discretion of team leadership.

Student Expectations

LASA Robotics welcomes students of all experience levels. We teach everything required to succeed on a competitive robotics team, but students must commit to working safely and effectively.

Grades

Students must prioritize academics and maintain UIL eligibility to stay on the team and be eligible for travel. Those traveling must inform teachers in advance and complete all classwork, and make-up assignments.

Attendance Policy

Being on the team requires 15+ hours per week during competition season and 6+ hours per week in the off-season. Meeting schedules are in the [Season Overview](#). Students may need to prioritize robotics over other activities and should consult Lead Coaches if unsure. Attendance is tracked to the minute—members must sign in and out to receive credit. Mentors may adjust or add meetings that fall outside of the regular meeting schedule; attendance at these extra meetings contributes positively but is not required. Fall eligibility requires attending at least 50% of meeting time; spring requires 60%. The fall attendance check will occur on the Friday before Fall Final Exams. Failing to meet the fall attendance threshold will result in a student being dismissed from the team. Spring attendance checks occur two weeks before travel events; students below the threshold are ineligible to travel.

Transportation

Most team activities happen outside school hours. Students should proactively arrange transportation with parents or guardians. Board members and a Parent Google Group are available to help coordinate rides.

Outreach Requirements

Rookie students must volunteer for and complete at least 20 outreach hours before fall finals week, and returning students must complete at least 25 hours before finals week to be eligible to stay on the team for the spring. Additional hours are required to be eligible for leadership positions the next year, and hours are tracked by the outreach lead with support from the communications lead. See the [Outreach Hour Guide](#) for details on qualifying activities.

Service Requirements

Students must complete at least 10 service hours each season, as tracked by the team co-captains, to be eligible for travel. Service hours must be completed outside of normal meeting times and include tasks like cleaning, organizing, and equipment repair. Service hour

checks are completed two weeks before all travel events in the spring. Students who have not met the attendance threshold will be ineligible to attend travel events.

Dismissal from the team

Team membership is a privilege that requires responsibility, respect, and commitment. Students may be dismissed from the team for repeated behavioral issues, failure to meet academic or attendance expectations, or serious violations of team policies. Dismissal decisions are made by the mentor team after considering prior warnings, any Plan of Assistance (detailed below), and the student's overall impact on the team environment. Parents will be notified of any dismissal, and students are welcome to reapply in future seasons if appropriate.

Codes of Conduct

Behavior Expectations

LASA Robotics members stand out for their enthusiasm, support, and sportsmanship, representing LASA, Austin, sponsors, and the team. We promote a high-energy, friendly, and professional atmosphere; violations of the code of conduct will be discussed between the Lead Coaches and the faculty sponsor, and can result in loss of membership. Students must cooperate with mentors and follow requests; concerns should be addressed with Lead Coaches and the Faculty Sponsor.

At School

Your behavior at school reflects on our team. Always be polite and respectful to staff, avoid disruptions, and know that any disciplinary action may lead to team review.

At Meetings

Phones should only be used during meetings for team-related work or with mentor approval; distractions like games or social media are not allowed. Repeated misuse may result in being sent home. Respect others, follow the Golden Rule, and help maintain a professional, inclusive environment—bullying or harassment of any kind is not tolerated. Team members are expected to take initiative and actively seek out tasks when not assigned one.

At Events

Your behavior in public reflects on both you and the team. Always practice Gracious Professionalism—words, tone, and body language matter. If conflicts arise, speak to a mentor immediately. Physical altercations are not allowed and may lead to disciplinary action, including being sent home at your family's expense. The team follows a mandatory buddy system at events and has a defined curfew for each day of the event. Students not following the buddy system or curfew will face disciplinary consequences.

Online

Students must provide a non-AISD email during registration and use Slack for team communication, with notifications enabled. Slack should be installed on phones if possible; students without access must pair with someone who does. Direct messages (DMs) should be used few and far between. Communication over Slack should happen in subteam channels, and personal communication should happen outside of Slack. **All direct messages to/from adults must include another adult.**

Parent communication is via the LASA Robotics Google Group.

Interpersonal Relationships

Romantic relationships must not affect team activities. Public displays of affection are prohibited, and couples must stay with the group and cannot act as each other's buddies or roommates. Mentors may take disciplinary action if needed, and parents will be informed promptly.

Health

Health information will be collected for events, following AISD guidelines. **Students should stay home if sick to protect others.** Absences due to illness can be excused if communicated to the Lead Coaches within 3 calendar days. If illness occurs during a trip, students must tell a chaperone or mentor immediately so they can receive assistance. If necessary, parents must arrange and cover the cost of return transportation.

Uniforms

LASA Robotics uniforms include a team shirt or jersey with appropriate jeans or shorts, and must follow the AISD dress code. Students new to the team will receive two LASA Robotics shirts in their first year. Returning students will receive one new LASA Robotics shirt per year. Additional shirts (including Hawaiians and robot-specific shirts) are available for purchase through CheddarUp for students, families, and friends. Hawaiians are only available for current students. The care and cleaning of the uniform is the students' responsibility - please do not use bleach or harsh detergents. Closed-toe shoes, safety glasses, and tied-back hair are required in the shop and at competitions. See the [Machine Shop Safety Policy](#) for full guidelines.

Probation & Plan of Assistance

A Plan of Assistance (POA) places a student on probation to address specific behaviors with clear steps for improvement, helping them remain eligible for the team.

Academic

Grades will be regularly monitored, and students must maintain UIL eligibility to stay eligible. If struggling, a POA may be issued, outlining improvement steps, timeline, and consequences,

shared with parents. Becoming UIL ineligible triggers a POA, and two failing grades may lead to dismissal. If issues aren't resolved by the end of probation, it may be extended or result in removal from the team.

Team members are expected to follow the Honor Code. Academically dishonest students will be reported to the team by the school admin. Students who have cheated will be disqualified from attending 2 competitions and will be stripped of any leadership roles they hold.

Behavioral

Behavior is regularly monitored to ensure a positive and respectful team environment. If a student displays behavior that disrupts the team or violates rules, they may be placed on a POA. This plan will outline the expected changes, a timeline for improvement, and potential consequences, and will be shared with the student and their parents. Continued behavioral issues or failure to meet the POA requirements may result in probation extension or removal from the team.

Team Registration and Onboarding

Annual re-registration is required for all students.

- **Aug. 24–30:** Advertising through presentations, banners, posters, and announcements, directing students to the Interest Form
- **Sept. 2:** Interest Form is due
- **Sept. 4:** Cookie Social for students and parents to learn about the team
- **Sept. 8, 11, 15, 18:** Trial Days with subteam projects
- **Sept. 19 (6pm):** Membership Request form due
- **Sept. 22:** Final decisions released

Onboarding / Re-registration

- **All STUDENTS will submit the following before September 2 at midnight:**
 - ☐ Team Registration Form
- **All PARENTS will submit the following before September 2 at midnight CST:**
 - ☐ Team Registration Form (including Voly registration, FIRST in Texas Consent & Release, & FIRST HQ Registration)
- **All STUDENTS will submit the following before September 19 at 6pm CST:**
 - ☐ Tryout Form
 - ☐ Machine Shop Safety Quiz
 - ☐ Handbook Quiz

Team dues will be required in two installments, one on October 1, after all students and families have been notified of their position on the final roster and the other on January 9, 2026. All payment information is available at: <https://my.cheddarup.com/me/lasarobotics>.

Membership Request Process

After attending the cookie social and with a signed [LASA Parental Consent for School Sponsored Clubs form](#), students enter a two-week evaluation period where mentors and student leads assess their participation, behavior, and work ethic. Students will be asked to go through six 45-minute rotations. A membership request form collects information on each student's commitment to the team and their desire to learn. Based on this form, mentor feedback, and team capacity, students are either approved or deferred by mentors. Students who have questions about the membership request process are welcome to submit their questions to mentors@lasarobotics.org. Students must submit all inquiries regarding team membership. Inquiries done by parents/guardians of students or other adults will not be considered.

Off-schedule additions to the roster may be handled by the mentors for exceptional circumstances.

Safety Training

Our team operates out of the shop space at LASA High School. All team members must pass shop safety training and the associated quiz before September 19th at 6pm CST to work in the shop. Other workshops/training may be approved on a case-by-case basis for specific machines that are outside of the generic metal and wood shop tools (CNC router, CNC Mill, Laser Cutter, etc). Students and parents/guardians must fill out the Shop Safety Agreement form BEFORE the student works in the shop.

Parent Meeting

Parent meetings will be held in person from 7-8 PM on Sept. 4, and a virtual parent meeting will be held on September 18 to review key events and give parents a chance to meet team leadership and ask questions. Parent meeting attendance is required to join the team, and if no parent is available for either meeting, email president@lasarobotics.org to discuss exemptions.

Team Organization

Student Leadership

Student Leadership meets weekly with the mentors to coordinate upcoming events, plans for the next few weeks, and address any issues or improvements for the team. The roles for student leaders, selection process, and grounds for removal are detailed in the

 **Student Leadership Roles** document. Leadership meetings are open for silent observation from all team members.

Mentors

Our mentors consist of industry professionals, teachers, parents, and community members who volunteer their time to guide the subteams alongside student leadership. They are essential to our team's success. See the  **25-26 LASA Robotics Mentor Handbook** for more details.

Season Overview

Pre-Season (August – December)

Focus Areas:

- Recruitment and team building; Training and skill development; Fundraising

Meeting Schedule:

- Mondays & Thursdays: 5:00 – 8:00 PM
 - Homework/Dinner Time: 4:00 – 5:00 PM
- Additional meetings may be scheduled and announced via team communications.

Competitions:

- If schedule and availability allow, the team may attend pre-season competitions. These events help new members gain competition experience before the season begins.

Competition Season (January – Early May)**Focus Areas:**

- Designing, building, and testing the robot; Preparing for presentations and team roles; Competing in official FIRST events

Meeting Schedule:

- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday: 5:00 – 8:00 PM
 - Homework/Dinner Time: 4:00 – 5:00 PM
- Saturday: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Schedule updates and additional meetings (for specific subteams or the full team) will be announced on Slack.

Competitions:

- The team competes in the FIRST in Texas (FiT) District.
- Will be participating in two district events (March or early April, exact dates TBD)
- Possible advancement to:
 - FiT District Championship (Date TBD)
 - FIRST World Championship: *April 29 – May 2, 2026*
- Team leadership determines event roles such as pit crew and Impact presenters.

Off-Season (June – August)**Focus Areas:**

- Hosting **SMART Camps** (team's largest outreach and fundraising event); Iterating on robot designs; Preparing for the upcoming season; Participating in off-season competitions, as scheduling permits

Meeting Schedule:

- Mondays & Thursdays: 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Competitions:

- If schedule and availability allow, the team may attend off-season competitions. These events help returning students develop leadership skills at competition.

Travel

The team travels up to six times a year, providing key learning and growth opportunities. Travel is a highlight of the season and requires careful planning, with safety as the top priority. Students who meet eligibility requirements (good standing, outreach hours, safety training, tests) may travel, with rosters finalized by mentors. If spots are limited, selection is based on participation, behavior, and team needs. Travel is typically by chaperone cars, with students assigned to early (skeleton) or regular (muscle) crews.

Minimum Travel Requirements

- ☐ Maintain team eligibility and demonstrate appropriate behavior/responsibility for overnight travel
- ☐ Meet attendance, outreach, and service hour expectations
- ☐ Submit paperwork on time
- ☐ Complete safety/shop training
- ☐ Not be on probation

Travel eligibility is evaluated two weeks before each event. If a student loses eligibility to travel, refunds cannot be provided.

At Events

- All students must follow the team schedule; deviations require parent/guardian check-in/out with a mentor and chaperone.
- Cheering and respectful behavior are required
- No personal music in the pits
- Uniforms must be worn as directed
- Students are expected to keep the team's area clean & leave it cleaner than they found it
 - *Example: when the team eats, all trash in the area will be thrown away, including what was there before the team arrived.*
- Represent LASA Robotics professionally

Hotels

- Students share rooms in same-gender groups (up to four per room)
 - Students of the opposite gender may not enter another room of students for any reason.
- Chaperones enforce curfews and conduct room checks
- Hotel amenities may be used with appropriate supervision and attire

Competition Roles

- **Drive Team:** Selected team members who operate the robot; must attend all practices and be active on other subteams
- **Pit Crew:** Rotating members responsible for robot repair and maintenance
- **Scouting Team:** Collects and analyzes match data to guide strategy
- **Purple Aid:** Assist other teams and help maintain a strong FIRST community presence

Final role assignments are based on interest, performance, and team needs. More details will be shared as events approach.

Team Funding

Running a successful FRC team is a huge undertaking. LASA Robotics has a moderate budget when compared to other FRC programs, with projected 2025-2026 costs of \$140,000.

Grant Writing & Requesting Sponsorship

Students, led by the Business Lead, identify and apply for grants and seek team sponsorships. Current sponsors and perks are on the team's website: <https://www.lasarobotics.org/support>.

Parents with grant leads, business contacts, or who can help review applications are encouraged to get involved! Please reach out to business@lasarobotics.org.

Fundraising

All students must participate in team fundraising, which supports the robot, competition fees, team expenses, and travel costs.

SMART Camps

Since 2006, LASA Robotics' SMART (Science, Math, and Robotics Technology) Camps have introduced young students to robotics. This year, 180 campers explored STEM through LEGO Spike Prime, Vex kits, and team challenges. The camps raised \$40K+, with \$4,500 in scholarships enabling 25% of campers to attend at reduced or no cost—building confidence and a pathway to STEM and FIRST.

Sphere of Influence

Each student must send 10 personalized fundraising emails to adults in their network (not parents, teammates, mentors, or LASA staff), cc'ing business@lasarobotics.org, by the deadline. Students may also contact potential sponsors with approval from the Business Lead or a mentor.

Dues

Team operations are funded through fundraising, with membership dues helping cover costs. For 2025–26, dues are **\$500 per student**, with additional travel fees announced before events. Families facing financial hardship may email the treasurer (treasurer@lasarobotics.org) for a no-questions-asked waiver. Money should never be a barrier to joining LASA Robotics.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Families are vital to our success, helping build robots, students, and a supportive community. The LASA Robotics Board helps run the team and manage fundraising. Parents of freshmen and sophomores are especially encouraged to join at year's end to support knowledge transfer.

Communication

- **Google Group:** The Board sends frequent emails to everyone who is subscribed to lasa-robotics@groups.google.com. This is our primary way of communicating with families, sharing key dates, action items, volunteer needs, and urgent updates.
- **WhatsApp:** Join the team's WhatsApp group for questions, info sharing, and real-time updates during the season and competitions.
- **Facebook Group for Families:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1197732764330843>

Administrative & Logistical Responsibilities

Adults are expected to:

- Read all team emails
- Submit required forms and registrations on time
- Provide and update accurate medical information
- Sign permission forms and complete surveys as needed
- Communicate any concerns with appropriate team leadership
- Arrange transportation to and from LASA High School (carpooling encouraged)

Participation & Volunteering

Parents are encouraged to join team activities—meetings, competitions, and cheering at events. LASA Robotics relies on year-round volunteers, and families can sign up for roles and times that fit their schedules. Parents are encouraged to volunteer as event chaperones, ideally supporting at least one event per season. Ways to help include:

- Supervise students from 4–5pm before weekday meetings
- Provide a meal for the students
- Build out the playing field
- Make travel arrangements and improvements to the shop
- Connect our team to possible donors
- Have a special skill to offer? Please email volunteers@lasarobotics.org.

2025 - 2026 Team Leadership

Lead Coach 1

Claire Rowan

claireerowan@gmail.com

Lead Coach 2

Vince Kaufhold

vicente.kaufhold@gmail.com

Faculty Sponsor

Liz Hewitt

elizabeth.hewitt@austinisd.org

Co-Captains

Claire Newmark, c/o 2026

Sharvi Nakkala, c/o 2026

Strategy Lead

Soumik Chemudupati, c/o
2026

Communications Lead

Clara Swartzendruber, c/o
2026

Fabrication Lead

Alice Weber, c/o 2026

Mechanical Lead

Penelope Campbell, c/o 2027

Electrical Lead

Ashley Xu, c/o 2027

Design Lead

Michael Wang, c/o 2026

Software Lead

Arun Varadarajan, c/o 2026

Business Lead

Noam Wolinetz, c/o 2027

Outreach Lead

Aloysious Tasch, c/o 2026

2025 - 2026 Team Board

Our Board, made up of parents and community members, supports the team through fundraising, travel planning, meals, events, and parent communication.

President

Amanda Ray

Isaac, c/o 2026

president@lasarobotics.org

Treasurer

Kim Sherman

El Cid, c/o 2027

treasurer@lasarobotics.org

Secretary

Linsay Leslie

Levi, c/o 2028

secretary@lasarobotics.org

Board Members

Liz Hewitt

Chris Pawlowicz

Claire Rowan

Webmaster (Non-voting)

Courtney Newmark

Claire, c/o 2026

webmaster@lasarobotics.org

Volunteer Coordinator (Non-voting)

Holt Haley-Walker

Alice, c/o 2026

volunteers@lasarobotics.org

Travel Coordinator (Non-voting)

OPEN

Your Kid's Name Here!

Fundraising Consultant (Non-voting)

Tony Weber

Alice, c/o 2026

Board email: board@lasarobotics.org