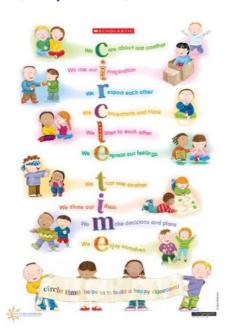# "Circle Time" is Not Just for Kindergarten

By Asha Seshan

Not the Droids You Are Looking For (Pennsylvania, USA)

"Circle Time is an excellent way of keeping everyone up-to-date, making decisions together, and giving each student their moment to shine."

The structure of team meetings can vary from team to team. A bit depends upon where you are meeting as well as the needs of the students. I found that the concept of "Circle Time" to be invaluable.
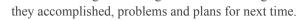
Starting and ending the meeting: Kindergarten students are familiar with the term "Circle Time". At the start of the class, the students all gather in a circle to talk, share, sing songs, etc. This is a time when students listen, learn, speak, watch and participate. I adopted this idea for robotics meetings six years ago. Regardless of the age of the students, I find that this structure for teams meetings works well.

At the start of team meetings, all the students gather together. We discuss what they did at home, anything they had trouble with, the results of any work they did, and what their plans are for this particular team meeting.

We repeat the same procedure at the end of the meeting. Students go around discussing what they accomplished, problems and plans for next time.

I find that Circle Time is an excellent way of keeping everyone up-to-date, making decisions together, and giving each student their moment to shine. It is a way for the team to respect each others' contribution. If a student has made no progress at all, they might even get motivated to work harder the next week after hearing what the others accomplished.

During the meeting: Most work is conducted in sub-groups of 2-3 students. These small groups work on robot design, missions, etc. Majority of the team meeting might be conducted in these smaller sub-groups. As a coach, I wander through the sub-groups checking on them occasionally, but mostly just listening in on the conversations and discussions.

These sub-groups will present their work to the larger group at the Circle Time that comes at the end of the meeting.

There are two reasons for doing this. 1) It is very hard for a team of ten to be constantly working together. Dividing into sub-groups to work on different missions or anything else is more efficient. 2) This subgroup will have the added benefit of practicing presenting their work and ideas to the entire group.