

**A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.
-Brad Henry**

Former Oklahoma governor Charles Henry once said, “A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.” It is because Brad Thompson accomplishes all these and more that 461 is proud to have him as our lead mentor. As an advocate for STEM education, Brad’s devotion to the field is unparalleled, and his influence can be witnessed throughout our community. As a technology specialist, FIRST coach, and outreach volunteer, Brad’s dedication extends throughout West Lafayette High School, Purdue University, and the state of Indiana.

Brad began mentoring our team while he was in college, and since then, he has continued to motivate our students to be the best they can be. He does this by going above and beyond in his role as lead mentor for Team 461. Brad arrives first at every meeting, attends every outreach event, and takes every opportunity to teach team members about STEM principles, while still expanding his own knowledge and skills in order to help better our team. One specific case of Brad’s influence was when he became certified to award Boy Scout badges in 2012. Since then, he has personally granted over 600 Boy Scouts their programming and robotics merit badges, which has helped 461 significantly increase our impact in the scout community. He has also created programs and websites for FRC teams to use for organization and communication. Furthermore, he also works as Webmaster of Indiana FIRST, and he is currently working to design a new statewide website with features based around the same resources he designed for our team. As a whole, Brad’s involvement in FIRST stems past our team. He has persistently and adamantly coached and mentored FLL and FTC teams in our area, and volunteers at the events his teams don’t attend. As for FRC, he has mentored rookie teams like Aluminosity at competitions, helping them work out the bugs in their code. Brad’s devotion to the FIRST program is vital to the success of our team, and strength of the FIRST program in Indiana.

Brad’s impact on West Lafayette High School has been equally important as his role in Indiana FIRST. As a technology teacher, Brad has been inspirational to his students. Jeanie Shin, a parent of one of his students describes Brad as someone who has “a rare gift to bridge together knowledge, encouragement, resourcefulness, and calm to motivate students, which he is able to do while empowering them to look within.” Brad is influential in his classroom and has worked to create programs other teachers can use. He designed wePict, a drawing based classroom response system for teachers to use for in-class games or review. This software is free, available on his website, and is used by the teachers within our school as a fun and unique way to teach.

All in all, Brad is an inspiration to our team. His hard work and devotion to teaching others is part of his wonderful character, and 461 is excited to call him our Woodie Flowers nominee.

Brad

- webmaster of Indiana FIRST
- fll, ftc, frc coach
- sponsored/coached ZR
- our lead mentor
- volunteers
- creator of backoffice
- coach/sponsor ACSL
- advocate for tech in the classroom
 - written programs for teachers to use
 - wePict
 - "drawing based classroom response system"

My children, students of the West Lafayette Community School Corporation, have been blessed to have Bradley Thompson as their mentor initially for Robotics but also junior high school in general.

It is a rare gift to bridge together knowledge, encouragement, resourcefulness and calm to motivate students. He is able to do this while empowering them to look within; sometimes a look is enough to send a student running back to a laptop with sudden inspiration. He works with students to understand the challenge presented, managing different styles of learning and communicating to complete the task. I know firsthand his sacrifice of personal time so students can meet and work together comfortably and in their own style. One such case involved students talking around a worktable with snacks! This freedom and encouragement extends far outside the lab; these students, encouraged by Bradley, have helped the elementary and junior high school students problem solve their own challenges with robotics, listening, offering counsel and leading to a new crop of articulate, experienced problem solvers.

Bradley Thompson has given our students the ability to communicate efficiently and effectively in order to work together to get a task done. In doing this he has also laid the foundation for friendship, mentoring and appreciation for learning.

Jeanie Shin