



Citrus Circuits
Fall Workshop Series

Building a Student Leadership Culture

by Mike Corsetto

Who Am I?

- Mike Corsetto
- Head Coach of Team 1678
- Director of Hardware Engineering at advanced.farm
- Going into 20th season in FRC
- Started mentoring 1678 in 2008
- I'm not that smart (Credit to Karthik, 254 and others)



Overview

- Why Invest in Student Leadership?
- Citrus Circuits Development
- Key Principles
- Citrus Circuits Methods
- Next Steps





Why Invest in Student Leadership?

Sustainability

- Competent student leaders can carry more responsibility for the team
- Competent student leaders inspire more competent student leaders



Soft Skills

- FRC is a great opportunity to grow soft-skills
- Fostering a healthy student leadership culture creates well-rounded FRC Grads
- Students come in at all points on a “soft skills” to “hard skills” continuum, often “hard skill” strong students are not challenged to grow



Competitive Potential

- Good leaders bring the best out of their team
- Good student leaders bring the best out of other students and coordinate efforts better
- Energized and motivated students will work harder





What is your
leadership role?



Citrus Circuits' Development

2005-2011 | Early Days

- 10-20 students, 1-3 mentors
- The team met rarely in the offseason, no training
- At kickoff, the team would decide who our captain, leads, and subteams are
- Most students were at robotics to hang with friends
- Student outcomes were mixed, not a lot of growth



2011-2014 | Depth

- 20-30 students, 3-5 mentors
- Team met regularly in the offseason, trainings started
- Student leadership established in the offseason
- Regular student leadership meetings began



2014-2018 | Growth

- 50-100 students, 5-10 mentors
- Offseason trainings are formalized and iterated on
- Training is tracked across the team by leads
- Leads are interviewed and selected in the offseason
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2018-Present | Rhythm

- 80-100 students, 10-20 mentors
- All incoming students are interviewed and selected
- All Leads, including outreach positions are interviewed and selected in the offseason
- The average Citrus kid does 3-5 interviews in career





Key Principles

More is Caught than Taught

- Coaches can talk until they are blue in the face and it won't make the same impact as kids seeing kids excel
- Seeing it be done shows them they too can do it
- Grow the expectation of what leadership is over time
- Find ways to place your “all-stars” in strategic roles
which goes into point #2



You Get What You Celebrate

- Students will see which students are rewarded in the team and set their aspirations accordingly
- Find ways to avoid elevating students that may be popular but do not embody the team values well
- Consider quieter students that might not consider leadership on their own accord



Students Can Do A LOT!

- Given the right environment and structure, students can achieve an astounding amount
- Students doing a lot is great for teachers/mentors, lean into this where you can



Fail Faster

- No students will come in truly ready for their role
- Fall work and projects can help “shake the bugs” out of the team and identify/resolve points of improvement





Citrus Circuits Methods

Leadership Selection

- In May, anyone on the team can nominate any students for leadership roles via google form
- Core Leadership (captains, lead mentors) review the nominations and schedule interview times
- Technical mentors participate in some interviews
- Core Leadership deliberates and makes selections



Team Selection

- In May, any student interested in the team can attend a recruitment meeting and learn more about Citrus
- Applications are received all through May
- The new Core Leadership team interviews all new applicants in June
- New Core deliberates and makes selections



Leadership Training

- We've typically tried to do a Leadership Retreat sometime over this summer, focused on team building, culture, and vision casting for the year
- Some of our mentors give a presentation in the fall about good communication, project mgmt, etc



Leadership Meetings

- Once a week, Captains, Subteam Leads, and Core Mentors meet to discuss team topics
- These can range from event logistics, behavioural issues, or technical topics
- The captains share a leadership update at the next general meeting following a leadership meeting



Member Tracking

- One consolidated spreadsheet tracks attendance
- Student Leads determine methods of logging training
- Students not meeting tracking requirements
(attendance, progress on training) are liable to be cut





Next Steps

Consider Your Current Structure

- What signals are you sending to your team about what it means to be a leader?



Be Patient

- The 1678 leadership culture took over a decade to develop into what it is today
- Leaps in team progress can often be correlated with generations of students
- Given the right environment, progress will happen



Focus on Progress

- Give your leaders time and opportunities to lead
- Each of your leaders will have strengths and weakness in different areas
- Find ways to





Thank You! Questions?

Mike Corsetto

Email:

corsetto@gmail.com

Instagram:

@mcorsetto