

**NASA Ames & Bellarmine Robotics**  
**Team 254 – The Cheesy Poofs**  
TEAM 254 HANDBOOK



# **Team 254: The Cheesy Poofs**

Bellarmino College Prep

## **Team Handbook**





## **Introduction**

Welcome to Team 254! We are excited to take you onto the team as a fully-fledged Cheesy Poof. This handbook contains the key policies, goals, grading system, and expectations of Team 254 and its members along with other information you will need.

The successes of Team 254 in robotics and its numerous other activities are all thanks to the dedication of our members. Your participation is essential to fulfilling our program's goals. Every member's commitment and responsibility keeps our team running smoothly. We hope that on Team 254, you will acquire life skills that you will continue to use throughout college and in your future career.

## **Mission Statement**

We aim to equip a community of students passionate about science and technology with the skills and initiative to become the next generation of leaders and create positive change in their respective career fields.

## **About**

Team 254 gives students the opportunity to become fully immersed in an environment of dedicated, like-minded students interested in engineering while acquiring the necessary skills to achieve their future goals. Not only do members acquire technical skill sets, they also learn the fundamentals of other corporate tasks, such as project management, leadership, team building, marketing, etc. More important than any competitive success or awards, the students of Team 254 grow academically, intellectually, and socially. Team 254 members gain a better understanding, a greater respect, and a more profound appreciation of the benefits of a good education. In line with the missions of parent organizations NASA and Bellarmine College Preparatory, Team 254 inspires and motivates our students to avidly pursue their academic, career, and personal goals both during their time on the team and in their futures.

## **Team History**

Team 254 was founded in 1998 in partnership with NASA Ames Research Facility. After Broadway High School's closure in 2000, Team 254 moved to Bellarmine College Preparatory. While the team's student members changed, The Cheesy Poofs have continued to flourish. Notable accomplishments and events include:

- 1999 : 254 begins competing in the FIRST Robotics Competition
- 2001 : 254 moves from Broadway to Bellarmine College Preparatory
- 2004 : 254 wins the FRC Chairman's Award, FIRST's most prestigious award
- 2009 : 254 begins competing in the VEX Robotics Competition
- 2011 : 254 wins the VEX Excellence Award, VEX's most prestigious award
- 2011 : 254 wins the FRC World Championship
- 2014 : 254 wins the FRC World Championship for the second time
- 2017 : 254 wins the first Festival of Champions in history



## **What We Do**

Team 254 members participate in a number of technical programs, as described below.

### **The *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) and Build**

The FIRST Robotics Competition comprises of more than three thousand teams worldwide and releases an annual challenge requiring teams to design, build, and program robots to compete in 3 v. 3 games.

Members work with faculty advisors and mentors to design and build advanced robots to compete in the FIRST robotics competition. After the game is revealed, FRC robots are built using computer-aided designs and advanced metalworking equipment. Over the course of an intensive 6 week period, Team 254 builds three robots, a competition robot and a practice robot. At the end of the build season the competition robot is bagged and tagged while the team continues to work on the practice robots until competition.

### **The VEX Robotics Competition and Build**

The VEX Robotics Competition, another component of Team 254, also releases an annual game challenge, but with smaller (18"x18"x18") robots built with the VEX Design system. The challenge requires teams to design, build, and program robots to compete in fast paced, technically challenging 2 v. 2 games.

For VEX Builds, members are split up into smaller VEX teams headed by student captains and moderated by mentors, faculty advisors, and student leaders. During the season, members build and program robots to meet the game's challenges. Throughout the school year,, members compete in a series of tournaments with the goal of qualifying for the VEX State and World Championships.

### **Scouting and Strategy**

Both competitions require an element of strategy in addition to technical capability. All students are free to contribute to strategy, especially at whole-team discussions at the FRC and VEX Kickoff days.

Scouting, on the other hand, occurs during the tournaments, and serves to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the competition, develop match strategies, and determine which robots to team up with during alliance selection.

### **MIT Zero Robotics**

MIT Zero Robotics is a robotics programming competition where students learn to program autonomous robots, known as SPHERES (Synchronized Position Hold Engage and Reorient Experimental Satellites), to solve a unique challenge, provided each year.



The tournament takes place throughout the fall in a series of virtually simulated competitions.

## **Sub-teams**

All nontechnical work on team projects is divided into different categories and assigned to the corresponding sub-team. Each sub-team is headed by a student leader who delegates work to its members. Every student is assigned to one sub-team based on their application preferences. They will have obligations to this primary sub-team and be responsible for completing action items delegated to them. In addition, students are encouraged to join and participate in additional sub-teams, as long as they fulfill their obligations to their primary sub-team.

Sub-teams support the whole team in completing vital nontechnical tasks, so that the team functions effectively in all areas. Leaders will take note of students participation and contributions on their sub-team and inform the mentors. If the student is found to be lacking, this feedback may lead to the mentors warning students and their parents about their performance level and changing students' progress report credit (described under *Grades*).

Members on the leadership team without a sub-team and VEX captains are not obligated to work on a sub-team due to their leadership responsibilities.

The functions of each sub-team are listed below.

### **Programming and Controls**

Members develop software for both FRC and VEX robots. Robots are programmed using advanced control algorithms in RobotC, C++, and/or Java. Sub-team members will also participate in other programming tasks separate from robot code that involve a multitude of languages.

### **Graphic Design and Media**

Members create sponsor decals for the robot, sponsor and competition awards, team apparel, merchandise, and publicity materials including banners, fliers, handouts, and displays. They are also responsible for supporting the media needs of the other sub-teams, creating templates, and creating and maintaining the team's identity standards in official documents and as displayed at tournaments and other official events. Students on this sub-team also learn to use industry standard tools in the Adobe Creative Suite and other programs to create media materials for the team.

### **Documentation and Submissions**

Responsible for written content required by any of the sub-teams, this sub-team takes photos and video footage to document team events for use in videos, publicity materials, and award submissions. Members write and enter submissions for several FIRST and VEX awards such as the FIRST Chairman's Award and the VEX Excellence Award.

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They also write materials for the team's website and document the FRC builds and events through the blog.

### **Public Relations**

Members on the Public Relations sub-team are responsible for maintaining Team 254's public image at outreach and other public events and engaging our audiences through our online presence on our blog, Facebook, Twitter, Chief Delphi, and other social media channels. The Public Relations sub-team is also responsible for ensuring that FRC, VEX, and team events are documented and publicized through our various social media platforms. This sub-team also works alongside the Business Development sub-team and Outreach sub-team to find and write grants and to coordinate the team's impression at events respectively.

### **Outreach**

Members on this sub-team coordinate outreach events by working with other teams and community organizations. Members on the team mentor FLL teams, volunteer at STEM events, and provide support to other FRC teams. Specifically, this sub-team hosts Engineering Day, an outreach event bringing middle school students and teachers to the lab to build and compete with a robot while learning about STEM. Although members of this sub-team are expected to participate deeply in outreach, every student on the team is encouraged to attend outreach events as well.

### **Web Development**

Members maintain the team website to contribute to the team's public image, communication, and success in various website competitions. The team also develops and maintains web applications to assist with internal and external team functions. The website also hosts the team's blog, spreading news of team events outside the team and keeping members updated through the Build Blog. A variety of team information, documents, and tutorials are free to access on the website as well, acting as resources for anyone on or off the team.

### **Business Development**

Members attract potential sponsors by raising awareness about the team and creating donor materials. They work with the Documentation and Submissions sub-team on writing grant applications, and with the Public Relations sub-team to identify potential donors. They also update the team budget, notifying the Finance sub-team of all incoming donations; generate a comprehensive business plan; and work with the Public Relations director to find and write grants to secure additional sponsorship. Finally, members plan sponsor recognition events with the Outreach and Public Relations sub-teams to maintain good relations with existing sponsors.

### **Finance**

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Members create and update the team budget while tracking all team expenses, including the purchase of materials and equipment. This sub-team, with assistance from the Business Development sub-team, helps create a comprehensive financial statement, maintain a business plan, and ensure the team stays within its budget. To ensure the correct tracking of robotics expenditures, this sub-team generates a bill of materials for the FRC season, allowing the team's purchases to be easily viewed and understood.

## **Joining the Team**

Team 254 Membership is open to all students attending Bellarmine. All interested students are invited to attend the informational lunch meetings in Sobrato theater as well as the "Open House" period by coming to the lab after school, talking with team members, and learning about all the aspects of the team. Prospective members must then submit an application by September 15th describing their experiences during the open lab and why they want to be on the team.

Members from the previous year must also reapply. Decisions are based on the prior year's event attendance, dedication to the team, and the written application.

Following the announcement of the team roster, students invited to join and return to the team must turn in the completed contract (last 2 pages only) at the end of this handbook to a faculty member associated with the robotics team.

## **Eligibility**

In order for students to be eligible to participate on the team, they must:

- Turn in the completed contract at the end of this handbook
- Maintain academic eligibility
  - Academic eligibility requires students to maintain GPA above a 2.0
- Comply with rules established in the Bellarmine handbook
- Participate with the team for the duration of the school year

## **Member Obligations and Opportunities**

### **Team Dues**

Due to the high cost of materials, registration, and other fees associated with robotics, each team member is expected to contribute \$120 annually for team dues. This is billed through the family's Bellarmine account. In return, each student will receive two team t-shirts and a laser-engraved name-tag. Please contact a faculty advisor if you are unable to financially meet this requirement.

### **Meetings**

Whole team meetings are held at 2:54 pm on Tuesdays in Andrade Theater. It is mandatory that members attend all meetings. Other project groups and sub-teams will

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also have meetings as announced. Certain meetings will be declared "Critical Meetings" as a prerequisite for attending competitions or other events.

### **Mandatory Events**

During the year, all team members are also required to attend the following events:

- Mandatory Returning Member Meeting – First Day of School
- Bellarmine VEX Tournament – Volunteer or Participant
- Chezy Champs FRC Tournament - Volunteer or Participant
- FRC Kickoff – Beginning of January

The team leadership may announce other mandatory events during the year. Students who cannot attend a mandatory event should speak with a faculty advisor at least a week in advance of that event.

### **Communication**

All members are required to have an active e-mail address that is registered with the team. They must also check it daily. Messages will be communicated to members over Mattermost, via email, during meetings, and on the blog.

### **Team Website and Calendar**

The team website is located at [team254.com](http://team254.com). All members must create a website account with the team and are encouraged to subscribe to the Team Calendar through the Members Portal.

### **Email Group**

When a parent or member creates an account on the team website, that member will be added to the team mailing list and will begin receiving email updates from Team 254. Only students who are registered on the website will receive team emails.

### **Mattermost**

Students are required to join the team's Mattermost channel at [chat.team254.com](http://chat.team254.com). Accounts are created for each student as soon as they join the team. The Mattermost software is available as a desktop app for your computer and as an app, which you can download on your mobile device. Team announcements, group chats, and private messaging are all available through Mattermost, so it's a vital tool for team communication.

### **Team Blog**

Team 254 maintains a blog on the team website that members are required to check daily throughout the FRC build season. Please read the blog before messaging a student leader for more information regarding build progress, tournaments, or anything else that may have been featured on the blog.

### **Workshops**

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Throughout the year, workshops are held to teach the team needed skills. Members are encouraged to take advantage of them and attend. Mandatory sub-team specific workshops may also be held in order to introduce members to sub-team specific skillsets.

## **Outreach**

The team participates in numerous demonstrations and other outreach events throughout the year. This is an important way to interact with and enrich the community while also spreading our message and brand. Outreach is important on Team 254, and attendance is open to anyone on the team.

## **Grades**

To recognize involvement, each member will receive a Pass on their transcript. All members of the team are committed to remain on the team for both semesters.

## **Periodic Progress Reports**

Every semester a student will receive credit for participating in robotics unless they are found to not be contributing to the team (such as not attending builds or failing to complete sub-team action items). In that case, a mentor or faculty advisor will talk to them and they may lose out on robotics credit unless they start contributing.

## **Self-Assessment**

Members must fill out a self-assessment each semester to be reviewed by the mentors by following a structured set of questions and reflecting on their own performance on their primary sub-team and the team as a whole. Weaker participation will be reflected in their grade and their ability to return to the team in the future.

Note that while members will sign in and out of the labs and hours will be recorded, they are for lab attendance and safety and have no direct impact on a student's grade.

## **General Information**

### **Behavior**

Team 254 expects that all members behave maturely and professionally at all times and comply with the standards of Bellarmine College Preparatory and NASA Ames Research Center. Members whose behavior is below the standards of Team 254 will face disciplinary action.

It is important that all team members remember that whenever they are engaged in a team-related activity, whether online or in person, they are representing Team 254. Their actions will reflect upon the team, our sponsors, and Bellarmine College Preparatory.

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Team members should treat their teammates, members of other teams, and the general public with kindness and respect at all times.

At competition, those who are not members of Team 254 but are cheering for or representing the team in any way, such as parents and friends, must adhere to these guidelines as well.

### **Submissions & Publications**

To maintain the team's high standards of quality and imagery, the leadership team must approve any documents or media pertaining to the team prior to their release. This includes award submissions, publicity materials, news articles, pictures, videos, and posts to social media or discussion forums, and the website.

### **Confidentiality**

Team 254 prides itself on its competitive excellence and on being a source of inspiration and mentorship for other teams. The team shares ideas and design concepts with other teams and offers help to anyone who asks for it. However, the team believes that helping others work through the engineering process is much more effective than giving away fully-formed solutions and designs.

Members are not permitted to disclose any ideas, designs, documents, photos, or videos to anyone not affiliated with Team 254 without the explicit approval of the leadership team. Confidentiality is taken very seriously and is punishable up to dismissal from the team.

### **FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC)**

The FIRST Robotics Competition is an advanced competition which begins in January and occurs for the remainder of second semester. The FRC team works together on a single robot design, with subgroups existing for each aspect of the robot. All members can participate in any part of the design or build process. No prior experience is necessary.

- FRC Build will occur for the duration of second semester and a portion of the first semester at the discretion of the leadership team.
- Build sessions will go from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday. However, specific build dates may change depending the discretion of team leadership and mentor availability.

### **VEX Robotics Competition (VRC)**

Challenges for the VEX competition are released in late April and the teams begin to build in August or September. Members can participate in any part of the design or build process. No prior experience is necessary.

All new members and interested returning members will be assigned to a VEX Team. If they have any questions or concerns about the assignment process, they should contact the leadership team.

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- VEX build sessions will typically occur three days a week during the first semester, and two days a week during the second semester, however this is subject to change based on the discretion of team leadership and mentor availability.
- VEX builds will occur at the Bellarmine Robotics Lab.
- VEX robots will be built with parts and equipment owned by Team 254. All equipment and parts are returned at the end of the year. Teams are responsible for missing items.
- Every team must successfully pass a design review moderated by student leaders and mentors in order to begin building their robot. Furthermore, teams pass subsequent design reviews in order to perform major robot changes at the discretion of the VEX Technical Lead. It is the responsibility of VEX Captains to schedule design reviews.
- Each team must document their progress daily in an engineering notebook, which will be presented to judges at VEX tournaments.
- Decals for VEX Robots must be compliant with the Identity Standards and approved by the Media and Graphic Design Director.

## **Facilities**

### **Bellarmino Robotics Lab**

The Bellarmine Robotics Lab serves as the primary workplace for almost all robotics activity on the team. Team 254's on-site robotics lab is located in Bellarmine's Luccardo parking lot. The lab features a machine shop area, two full sized VEX fields, a 70% size FRC field, eight workspaces, and computer workstations.

### **Rules & Guidelines for Team Facilities**

- No member is ever to work without a mentor or faculty moderator on site.
- Food and drink is allowed at team facilities only at the discretion of an adult mentor or faculty advisor. Members must use common sense when given permission to have food and drink.
- When finished using a tool, it must be returned to its designated location in the lab. At the end of every work session, all tools and materials must be put away.
- If a member leaves before a work session is over, that member must clean for at least fifteen minutes before leaving. Members must announce to a mentor when they begin cleaning for credit.
- Members are not allowed to leave the lab before notifying and signing out with a mentor or faculty advisor.
- If a power tool malfunctions or breaks, it must be reported to a mentor immediately.
- Electrical devices of any kind may never be powered by daisy-chaining cords or power strips.
- Always wear safety glasses and other pertinent safety equipment when operating power equipment or are near somebody who is operating power equipment.

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- Loose hair and long clothing must either be tied back or removed before a member is permitted to use any machine tools.
- Members must partake in a robotics related activity if they are in the lab. If a member is caught not participating in build they will be asked to leave the lab. Horseplay and games will not be tolerated.
- All members must abide by the guidelines set forth by the Bellarmine transportation form. Any questions about a student's transportation status should be taken to a faculty advisor.
- Faculty and mentors always have the final word in any situation where safety is at stake. This is due to the hazardous nature of Robotics.
- All applicable rules of Bellarmine College Preparatory apply at the NASA lab or any place where robotics work is being done.

Failure to comply with the established rules will result in disciplinary action by adult team members and/or dismissal from the lab.

## **Identity**

Team 254 is well known throughout the robotics community and has a very distinct identity associated with it.

### **Identity Standards**

Team 254 has developed a set of comprehensive identity standards to help maintain and preserve our strong team identity. The policies outlined in the identity standards are binding and must be followed for all team appearances and communication. For more information, see the Identity Standards posted on the team website.

### **Dress Code**

The dress code must be maintained at competition, all off-season events, and robot demonstrations. Maintaining the dress code is encouraged on the school days before and after a robotics competition in order to raise awareness at school. For more detailed information, see the Identity Standards.

### **Photography and Media**

All members must be willing to be photographed and appear in team-related publications.

## **Travel & Competition**

### **Eligibility**

Eligibility for overnight FRC tournaments is determined by the faculty & mentors. They will look at a member's participation and contributions throughout the semester. All members are encouraged to attend local tournaments.

### **Payment**

Certain competitions require travel. This will require payment from members. Members will only be refunded if another member takes their spot. If cost is an issue, please speak with a faculty advisor as special arrangements can be made.

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## **Roles & Responsibilities**

Prior to competition, members will be divided into drivers, pit crew, scouts, and documentation. It is vital to the success of the team that members maintain the roles that they are given. When at competition, members are not permitted to engage in unrelated activities, such as homework without express permission from a mentor. However, members are encouraged to watch matches, meet other people, and look at other team's robots.

## **Behavior**

Behavior that is deemed below the standards of Team 254 will result in punishment by a faculty advisor or adult mentor. Severe infractions may result in an immediate flight or bus trip home at the expense of the team member, and/or dismissal from the team.

## **Transportation**

### **Local Events**

Several events such as FRC build, outreach, and other events within Santa Clara county may not have transportation scheduled by the team. For these events, it is the member's responsibility to arrange transportation.

### **Silicon Valley Regional (FRC)**

Members who wish to attend the competition must arrange their own transportation.

### **Travel Tournaments**

Bellarmino will arrange all transportation, but members are responsible for the cost and will be billed directly by Bellarmine. Team members may be required to arrange their own transportation to the airport. Students on financial aid will get assistance to pay for the travel costs, however, if they cancel, they must pay any cancellation fees. All student members must travel with the team. Members must sign up in advance for all long-distance tournaments.

### **School Absences**

If a member will miss school due to a robotics event, it is that member's responsibility to inform teachers of an absence at least one full week ahead of time and arrange for completion of missed work. That member must also fill out a planned absence form one week prior to the date of absence. If a student misses school due to illness, they may not attend any robotics function later that day. Students may not miss school after a tournament due to fatigue or postponed homework.

## **Team Leadership**

Team 254 is managed by a leadership team consisting of student leaders, adult mentors, and faculty advisors. The leadership team's duties go beyond those of regular members. This team makes administrative decisions, plans events, and manages projects. Every member of the leadership team puts in hundreds of hours of work behind the scenes to ensure that the team operates smoothly.

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## **Leadership Meetings**

The leadership team meets weekly year-round. All leadership meetings are closed to students not on the leadership team, but the meeting minutes will be publicly available to team members. However, students are encouraged to approach leadership team with relevant concerns.

## **Leadership Team Selection**

At the end of each school year, a selection committee consisting of mentors, faculty advisors, and alumni will choose next year's leadership team. The selection process is based on previous leadership experience, dedication, expertise, and a written application. Leadership roles are modified every year.

## **Leadership Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Team President**

The team president is responsible for keeping team unity, making sure the leadership team functions as designed, running all team meetings, and being a team spokesperson.

### **FRC Technical Director**

This leader oversees the overall robot design process and technical aspects of FRC as well as organizing workshops and ensuring that team members are adequately prepared for the season.

### **FRC Operations Director**

This leader is responsible for FRC competition preparation including scouting, pit construction, transportation, meals, and participation.

### **FRC Technical Lead**

This leader oversees the design process concerning one or more particular subsystems of the robot and assists the FRC Technical Director in organizing workshops and ensuring that team members are prepared for the season.

### **VEX Technical Director**

This leader is responsible for organizing VEX build related activities, managing and organizing VEX Captains, and ensuring members get the most out of the technical aspects of VEX.

### **VEX Operations Director**

This leader is responsible for VEX competition preparation including scouting, pit construction, transportation, meals, and participation.

### **Software Director**

This leader and his sub-team responsible for the programming and electronic functions of FRC and VEX robots.

### **Media Director**

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This leader and his sub-team create all publicity and robot related media and maintain the Identity Standards.

## **Documentation Director**

This leader and his sub-team are responsible for the creation and archiving of all team content including the website, recording of competition, award submissions, grants, and the team blog.

## **Public Relations Director**

This leader and his sub-team are responsible for maintaining and improving the team image, identity, and presence within the community, and maintaining the team's outreach program.

## **Outreach Director**

This leader and his sub-team are responsible for coordinating and organizing appearances and robot demonstrations at outreach events.

## **Web Development Director**

This leader and his sub-team are responsible for website functionality, enhancements, and team databases. They work with the Documentation & Submissions Director to manage and maintain website content.

## **Business Development Director**

This leader and his sub-team manage the team as a business by using a comprehensive annual operational plan, planning and securing funding from sponsors, and managing in-kind resources.

## **Finance Director**

This leader and his sub-team are responsible for team part orders, business plan, and documentation of all incoming and outgoing grants, donations, and transactions.

## **Contacting Leaders**

If you are interested in working on a leader's sub-team, or have a question about work you are doing for that person, message them through Mattermost or email them by referring to the leaders page on our website at: [team254.com/leaders](http://team254.com/leaders).

## **Authority of the Handbook**

The rules and policies set forth in this handbook are binding and must be followed by all team members. The handbook may contain appendices including the Team Identity Standards. These documents are binding as well. The leadership team has the authority to modify the handbook at any time. The team will be notified of any modifications. All students must acknowledge the Authority of the Handbook by signing the contract and form below.



## Student Contract

By signing below I acknowledge and understand all points listed below:

- I have read the handbook describing Team 254: The Cheesy Poofs and agree to comply with the policies outlined within.
- Participation in the program requires attendance at mandatory events, and I will comply with the schedule of said events.
- The equipment used during construction of the robot can cause serious harm injury if not used correctly. I understand that members are not permitted to use any piece of equipment until they have been instructed on its safe use and are not permitted to use any piece of power equipment without adult supervision.
- As long as my parents have signed the Bellarmine liability release/consent form, I will only ride in a car driven by an adult mentor, faculty advisor, approved parent or student, or myself to any robotics function.
- I agree and consent to allow my photographs, name, or comments to appear in media related to Team 254.
- I understand that violation of any of the policies above is punishable up to and including dismissal from the team.

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Student Name

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Bellarmino Student ID

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Email

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Student Signature

Date

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Parent Signature

Date



## Transportation Liability Contract

	Yes	No
1) My son has permission to operate a family owned motor vehicle to and from any school sponsored activity inside Santa Clara County.		
2) My son may transport other students to and/or from any school sponsored activity inside Santa Clara County.		
3) My son may travel in a vehicle operated by a Bellarmine parent or guardian to and/or from any school sponsored activity.		
4) My son may travel in a vehicle operated by another Bellarmine student to and/or from any school-sponsored activity inside Santa Clara County.		
5) My son may ride in a privately owned vehicle operated by a faculty advisor or adult mentor to and/or from any school-sponsored activity.		
6) My son has permission to use public transportation while accompanied by a school official or to travel to or from any school sponsored activity.		
7) I, as a Bellarmine parent/guardian, am willing to drive my son and other students to a Bellarmine sponsored activity when my son or other students are participating in that activity.		

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent Signature Date

\*Note: This is not the Bellarmine Transportation Form, and is only for mentor reference.