

C.S. Lewis students explore the world of robots

By [Laurent Bonczijk](#)

The Electric Lions were an energized pride during their training session Thursday night. The team is one of two fielded by the C.S. Lewis Academy middle school to compete in the first Lego league.

The school fielded two teams at a regional competition last weekend. Colin Ford and Christian Blair, both fifth grade students, are members of the Electric Lions team.

"We're both the main programmers on our team," Ford said, explaining that they write the program on a PC, using blocks that indicate the type of instruction: go straight, turn left, drive until you touch something ...

The programmers have to link all those actions to have the robot perform specific tasks. Each task is worth a certain amount of points depending on its complexity.

Bob Blair is the team's coach. On Thursday, he was debriefing the students about poise. Besides having their robot execute the tasks, the team must also answer questions about teamwork and their project and make a presentation.

Blair, demonstrating as he talked, asked if the students with their hands in their pockets, constantly twisting around and avoiding the judge's eyes made a better impression on the judges than a student who calmly looks at the judge and simply answers his or her questions.

After much laughter agreement among the students was that Blair's second approach was more effective. In this league the coach doesn't behave like a sports coach; he doesn't tell his students what to do. Instead he facilitates their meetings and helps them find their own solutions.

"The coaches aren't really allowed to tell us anything," Ford said.

"The idea is for them to make those explorations on their own," Blair said, adding that "it's really hard not to build anything for the team."