

Team 203 was established 24 years ago. Our acronym, SOUP, in honor of our founding sponsor Campbell's, has always been a part of our culture, which stands for STEAM, Outreach, Unity, and Progress. Our students, families, and mentors continue to practice and implement our SOUP mission throughout our school, community, and beyond. Our team has always represented the values of FIRST through our core belief that "SOUP" is good for everyone. With the start of our 24th year of FIRST, we will be making a slight, but meaningful change... an addition to SOUP. We are proud to be introducing, SOUPER!

The first letter of our acronym, SOUPER, stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). STEAM plays a critical role at our school and in robotics. Team 203's dedication to spreading the importance of STEAM is so strong that it was a leading factor in the implementation of many STEAM-based career programs at our vocational school. The list includes Information Technology, Pre-Engineering, Medical Arts, and Environmental Science. STEAM has always been a part of many of the career programs offered at our school. We are proud that several career programs will contribute to the success of Team 203. skills are taught through our career programs, at robotics, the STEAM summer camp, and during electives offered during and after school. Science, technology, engineering, art, and math are used in our many programs. Team 203 uses all of these to contribute to building the robot for competition.

The next pillar of our core values is O, for outreach. Team 203 has found it important to spread the idea of FIRST and STEAM around the community to create a learning environment for our students to grow. Camden County Technical School also holds annual summer camps for middle schoolers. This camp extends the knowledge of the various robotics programs we hold. Incoming sixth, seventh and eighth graders, design a robot with assistance from our team. Competitions are held at the end of each week, allowing the parents to see all the progress done

by their child. This gives the mentors and volunteers a chance to interact with the parents to explain what FIRST and VEX robotics is all about. Our school helped start seven FIRST lego league teams and continue to mentor them. We send two or three mentors to each participating school to help guide them with the robot and other project aspects. Students learn important skills like cooperation, inclusion, and integration. These programs and robotics leagues help integrate younger generations to offer inclusion for all students into the STEAM and FIRST robotics world. For the past seven years, our team has attended the New Jersey School Boards Conference, where we demonstrate the robot we used in the previous competition season, and host presentations on how the implementation of FIRST would be beneficial for their school district or local clubs. In 2018, our team was invited to the Rockwell Automation Fair where we demonstrated the 2018 Power Up season robot and presented it in front of staff members and representatives of the team. Along with two other teams, Team 203 was honored to represent FIRST at the PACK Expo in Philadelphia, PA. At these events, we were able to speak to numerous employees and adults about the significance of FIRST and the benefits of the program.

Following the acronym, SOUPER, the next letter, U, stands for unity. The students of Team 203 come from many different backgrounds, but are all bonded together by a passion for STEAM and robotics. Of the 55 students on the team, 15 identify as women, 4 identify as nonbinary, and nearly 50% of the team are people of color. We continue with our goal to make our team grow, and become more and more diverse. To further break down our team's demographics, the students on the robotics team represent 10 of the 30 career programs offered at our vocational school, 66% are on free/reduced lunch, and our students live in 20 of the 37 towns/districts in Camden County. It is important to our team that every student, regardless of background, has an equal opportunity to experience a STEAM-based education. In a white

male-dominated field, it is amazing that our team can give opportunities to those that are underrepresented in the STEAM fields and increase the diversity of the workplace.

It is imperative to our team that we are able to work with others from all backgrounds so that we can work together to improve the quality of life and education for everyone. For example, our team worked hard to make personal protective equipment (PPE) for our local first responders at the start of the pandemic. With the help of our team members and 3D printing, Team 203 was able to donate 375 face shields and 1000 face-mask clips to the Camden County Office of Emergency Management and other local first responders. Additionally, our team participated in the FIRST National Advocacy Conference in 2019, where members of the team talked to members of Congress regarding the importance of FIRST and support for the Christa McAuliffe Coin Bill (a bill responsible for making a commemorative coin for Christa McAuliffe, a teacher who tragically died in the Challenger crash). Every season, our team also engages in Critical Design Reviews with our sponsor, Lockheed Martin, and other teams. We unite together to critique each others' robot designs and inspire one another with different ideas and possible improvements. Overall, Team 203 values unity and diversity, for without the two values there would be no advancements.

The next pillar of our original acronym, SOUPER, stands for "progress." Team 203's humble beginnings began in 1998 as a small team of just 10 students, 1 mentor, and the basic tools needed to build a robot. Now, 24 years later, our team has grown and improved tremendously. We have had the honor of receiving the Engineering Inspiration Award at our Regional Competition, the Chairman's Award at the District Level, and even had the opportunity to compete at World's over 10 times. Our team feels as though we have all learned a vast range of skills, not all technical, but worthy just the same. When students join our team, they are not

just joining a robotics team. They are signing up for an experience unlike anything they've ever faced. The majority of our team's alumni go to college/work in the STEAM fields, using the skills they've learned from FIRST robotics. Progress to our team means growing in more ways than one. We measure progress for our team not only through our own individual growth but also how we've assisted the growth of our community. We host annual STEAM summer camps and additional events to educate and inspire students to learn the fundamentals of STEAM, as demonstrated by FIRST. We even designed a robotics elective for students that aren't able to stay after school and participate in the club. The elective is a curriculum based on the technical principles of FIRST Robotics. Our team was only able to grow this far with our team's hard work, alongside the generous and constant support from our mentors and the community.

Speaking of progress. Team 203 thought it would be best to add to our famous SOUP acronym and turn it into SOUPER! For our first new pillar, we have chosen "excellence." Ever since this team was founded, we have strived for excellence. We all work hard to build a well planned and beautifully designed robot to the best of our ability. We are motivated by our own goals not just for our robot, but also throughout our community. We encourage respect, sportsmanship, team spirit, and fun in everything we do! Our team is more than just robots, we are a family. As we continue to grow over the years we will continue to uphold our standards of excellence in all of our endeavors, and pass it down to generations to come.

Lastly, we have chosen "resilience" as our second newest pillar. Just like many other teams, we have been through many trials and challenges over the past couple of years. In the past three seasons, we've had our robot fall apart mid-competition, competitions canceled, and we were not permitted to meet at school due to COVID-19. However, we powered through it. The year we broke our robot was also the year we won the Engineering Inspiration Award. During

quarantine we held Google Meets to compensate, and we used our time and talent to make 3-D printed masks to help others. We have learned how to bounce back from mishaps, whether that be a worldwide pandemic or a flaw in our robot, we learned resilience. We learned to come together to solve our problems and push through until we reached success. We learned better teamwork, communication, and critical thinking skills, and our setbacks became challenges that allowed us to demonstrate our resilience as a team.

Team 203 firmly believes in the phrase “the robot builds the students.” In other words, through the robotics program, we are able to develop character, career and presentation skills, and professionalism. We have progressed immensely throughout the years. Our team works hard towards changing perspectives, connecting people, and creating opportunities through our culture of SOUPER. We are Team 203, the SOUPER Bots!