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## George School Teacher Authors New Robotics Textbook

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George School math and science teacher Chris Odom is the author of a new robotics textbook, *BasicX and Robotics: The Art of Making Machines Think*, published this month by Robodyssey Systems, LLC, a Trenton, New Jersey, company that creates robots and electronics for educational purposes. Feedback from the students in Chris's computer programming and robotics course at George School helped him to improve each chapter as he developed the book during the past two years. "I'm always driven by my students," Chris said. "Their questions and innovations are very exciting." If a student came up with a particularly interesting breakthrough or solution in class, Chris said, he included it in the book.

The ultimate goal of Chris's book and of his computer programming and robotics course at George School is to get students interested in math, science, and technology by building and programming autonomous robots--robots that can navigate and respond to their surroundings without direction from a remote control or other human involvement. "This is a real problem that people all over the world are addressing," Chris explained. He cited one of the more famous competitions, RoboCup, an international project that aims to create a team of autonomous robots that can win against the human world champion team in soccer. Chris's students program robots to operate independently in a variety of ways, such as moving on a tabletop without falling off the edge or monitoring the level of ambient light in a room.

Formerly a rocket scientist at Clemson University in South Carolina, Chris wrote *BasicX and Robotics* because he perceived a need for a textbook that provided a complete curriculum for robotics at the high school or college level. Existing instructional books on the topic, he said, provide projects for students without teaching the computer programming skills that would allow them to progress to advanced robotics work later. His book builds from simple explanations to complex challenges, teaching students BasicX, which he described as "a subset of Visual Basic, the world's most popular programming language." Students benefit from learning BasicX, he said, because they can apply it to further work in robotics or to computer programming in any field, including consumer electronics, physics, and biology.

More information about the book is available at <http://www.basicxandrobotics.com>.

### ABOUT GEORGE SCHOOL

George School, founded in 1893 by members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), teaches that each person shares a responsibility for helping to make the world a better place. The student body is diverse, representing twenty-two states and twenty-seven foreign countries and a variety of ethnic, racial, religious, academic, and economic backgrounds. Each year more than \$4 million in need-based financial aid is provided to eligible



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A Quaker, coeducational  
and day school, grades ni  
twelve.

students. More information about the school may be obtained by calling (215) 579-6547.

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