

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 2455

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

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District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

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DiMaso, Senators Pou, Thompson, Bateman, Turner, Assemblymen Space,
Wirths, Assemblywomen Murphy, McKnight, Assemblyman Houghtaling,
Assemblywomen Downey and Lopez**

SYNOPSIS

Establishes pilot program in DOE to support robotics programs in school districts.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As amended on November 8, 2021 by the General Assembly pursuant to the Governor's recommendations.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/2/2021)

1 AN ACT establishing a robotics competition pilot program in the
2 Department of Education.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. a. The Commissioner of Education shall establish a three-year
8 pilot program that provides grant funding to ¹encourage and support¹
9 school districts to ¹establish ²For Inspiration and Recognition of
10 Science and Technology (FIRST) nonprofit organization's² robotics
11 programs and¹ participate in ²[¹a¹ FIRST Robotics]²
12 [Competitions] ²[¹Competition¹] robotics competitions². The
13 purpose of the pilot program shall be to:

14 (1) increase opportunities for students to participate in ²[¹a¹
15 FIRST Robotics]² ²[¹[Competitions] Competition¹] robotics
16 competitions²;

17 (2) motivate students to pursue education and career opportunities
18 in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and

19 (3) improve students' knowledge in the fields of science,
20 technology, engineering, and mathematics.

21 b. ²(1) The Commissioner of Education shall identify one or more
22 eligible nonprofit organizations to assist school districts selected to
23 participate in the pilot program in developing robotics programs and
24 participating in robotics competitions. The commissioner shall
25 compile a list of eligible nonprofit organizations available to partner
26 with school districts and incorporate the contents of the list into the
27 application created pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection.
28 Nonprofit organizations included on the list shall offer technical
29 assistance to participating schools, including mentor-based assistance
30 in establishing a robotics program to develop science, technology,
31 engineering, and mathematical skills for students. A school district
32 that applies to participate in the pilot program shall partner with a
33 nonprofit organization on the list.

34 (²)² A school district that wants to participate in the pilot program
35 shall submit an application to the commissioner in such form as
36 required by the commissioner. The school district shall select no more
37 than one school serving students from grades nine through 12 to
38 participate in the pilot program.

39 c. The commissioner shall select up to 12 school districts for
40 participation in the pilot program. The commissioner shall select
41 districts in the northern, central, and southern regions of the State and
42 shall seek a cross section of school districts from urban, suburban, and
43 rural areas of the State. The ¹school districts selected by the¹
44 commissioner shall ¹[award] be eligible for¹ grants, within the limit
45 of available ¹[State appropriations] funds that are ²appropriated by

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined **thus** is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AST committee amendments adopted February 22, 2021.

²Assembly amendments adopted in accordance with Governor's recommendations November 8, 2021.

1 the State or² donated pursuant to subsection d. of this section¹, to
2 1[**selected school districts to**]¹ be used to support the development
3 and implementation of 2[**a FIRST**]² 1[**Robotics Program**] robotics
4 2[**program**]¹ programs² in the selected schools. The
5 1[**commissioner**]² 2[**FIRST nonprofit organization**]¹ commissioner²
6 shall determine the amount of each grant awarded under the program
7 and may award multi-year grants. Grants awarded pursuant to this
8 subsection shall be used by school districts to ²develop robotics
9 programs in which school districts partner with an approved nonprofit
10 organization that has demonstrated its ability to inspire students
11 through mentor-based programs to build science, technology,
12 engineering, and mathematical skills whereby funds may be used to²
13 provide coaching stipends, purchase materials for competitions,
14 finance competition travel expenses, and register for events. School
15 districts selected by the commissioner to participate in the pilot
16 program may apply for additional funding ²in separate grant
17 application periods² as teams in the school district become eligible to
18 participate in 1the¹ 2[FIRST]² 1[Robotics Program's] robotics
19 program's¹ district, district championship, and world championship
20 events.

21 d. 2[1The commissioner shall collaborate with the FIRST
22 nonprofit organization] Nonprofit organizations², educational
23 advocacy groups, and private sector businesses ²may collaborate² to
24 encourage and identify the donation of funds for the purpose of
25 awarding grants pursuant to subsection c. of this section. ²The
26 donated funds shall only be used for the purpose of supporting grants
27 under the program. Such funds shall be accepted by the Department of
28 Education to be used for the purposes of the program. If sufficient
29 funding is unavailable, the pilot program shall be paused and shall
30 resume once funding becomes available to support the issuance of
31 grants under the program.²

32 e.¹ 2There is established within the Department of Education a
33 fund to be known as the "Robotics Competitions in Schools Fund."
34 The fund shall be credited only with funds appropriated by the State or
35 funds donated for the purposes of the pilot program established under
36 this section. The fund shall only be used to provide grants to school
37 districts selected for participation under the pilot program.

38 f.² Three years following the establishment of the pilot program,
39 the commissioner shall submit a report to the Governor, and to the
40 Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1).
41 The report shall contain information on the implementation of the pilot
42 program, the number of students participating in the program, and the
43 recommendations of the commissioner on continuing, expanding, or
44 modifying the program.

45

46 2. This act shall take effect immediately.