



News Release

Contact: Martin Ackley, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs, 517-241-4395
Bill DiSessa, Spokesperson, 517-335-6649

State invests \$3 million in robotics programs at public and non-public schools across Michigan

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LANSING – As the state positions itself to be the leader in solving the talent gap, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is coming up with innovative solutions to bridge that gap. Today, it trumpets a \$3 million investment in programs that better prepare Michiganders for the careers of today and the future.

MDE has awarded state-funded grants to 506 public and non-public schools to start and expand robotics programs across the state. Grants are going toward building up more than 2,300 robotics programs statewide.

The grants are part of the state's continued investment in robotics programs, which have students learning about applications of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) through building robots for competitions – with the [FIRST Robotics](#) World Championships returning to Detroit next April.

Local school districts also may use the grant funds to participate in the [VEX Robotics](#) program and its Robotics Education and Competition (REC). Non-public schools may use their funds to participate in the Science Olympiad, as well.

“To invest in a stronger talent pipeline, we must invest in Michigan’s young people and the programs that prepare them for an evolving 21st Century global economy,” State Interim Superintendent Sheila Alles said. “It’s partnerships like these we see from these robotics programs – bringing business and education together – that help students understand the skills needed to be successful after high school, no matter their post-secondary career path. It also solidifies our footprint as a Top 10 education state in 10 years.”

“Programs like FIRST Robotics, VEX Robotics and the many other leading, high-tech programs are a perfect blend of real-world experiences and hands-on education that will pay dividends in Michigan’s bright and vibrant economic future,” said Jeremy Hendges from the Talent and Economic Development Department of Michigan. “This investment shows a state ready and willing to tackle the challenges and changes that are presented by an ever-changing global economy.”

State leaders say this is a smart investment that will keep Michigan moving forward.

This \$3 million in grants adds to the more than \$12 million Michigan has invested in FIRST teams since 2014.

Robotics programs empower students to demonstrate their competency in learning in a variety of ways. They have opportunities to solve problems that leverage the power of technology by developing and testing solutions in creative and imaginative ways. They are able to construct knowledge and make meaning of their learning experience for themselves. Students become global collaborators by utilizing technology to make connections with others to broaden perspective and learning through the creation of original products.

Research shows that students participating in FIRST programs across the state are twice as likely to major in science or engineering in college, and more than 75 percent of FIRST alumni are currently in a STEAM field as a student or professional.

The World Championships, planned for April 24-27, 2019, are expected to bring nearly 35,000 students and 700 teams to Ford Field and Cobo Center with four levels of competition. Last year, two Michigan teams were part of the winning alliance at the World Championships in Detroit, the second year in a row Michigan teams came out on top.

[See the complete list of awardees here.](#)

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