



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.30: After-School Robotics Grant Program.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.30

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Section 7.30 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) establishes the Educational and Competitive After-School Robotics Grant Program (Robotics Program) for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to (i) promote evidence-based, after-school programs for robotics education and competition and (ii) motivate students to pursue education and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

School Eligibility – Any public school unit (PSU) is eligible to apply to the Robotics Program to develop an after school robotics program with a robotics partner in any high school within the PSU. A "robotics partner" is a third-party entity, such as a nonprofit organization or institution of higher education, that is approved by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and is able to provide adequate support for an after-school robotics program. To provide adequate support, a robotics partner must meet at least all of the following criteria:

- Have a national presence in robotics education and competition.
- Provide adequate instruction and programming for students and adult volunteers in (i) robotics education, (ii) project based learning, and (iii) competitive robotics.
- Promote a safe and equitable social environment.

Applications for the Grant Program – DPI must develop application materials and selection criteria for the Robotics Program. Applications must include (i) evidence that the applicant has or will be able to establish a relationship with a robotics partner and (ii) a proposed budget for the after-school robotics program.

Award and Use of Funds – DPI must prioritize awarding grants to PSUs that had an after-school robotics program in the prior school year. Grant awards are capped at \$15,000 dollars per participating high school in the PSU. The grants can be used for any of the following purposes:

- Establishing a relationship with a robotics partner.
- Purchasing robotics kits.
- Providing stipends for coaches.
- Making payments associated with participation in a robotics league or robotics competition.
- Paying fees incurred as part of the administration of a robotics team.
- Providing transportation to after-school robotics program meetings for certain participating students.

Student Eligibility – If a student is enrolled in a school that does not offer an after-school robotics program, that student is eligible to participate in the after-school robotics program of the school located

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Senate Bill 257

Page 2

geographically closest to where the student resides that does have a program. A school can set guidelines for student participation in extracurricular activities, such as academic performance requirements, and it can also conduct a selection process for student participation.

Reporting – By April 1, 2027, DPI must report the following information to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division:

- The PSUs receiving grants and the amount of the grant.
- A description of how the grants were used.
- The PSUs that applied for grants but did not receive one.
- The extent to which students participating in after-school robotics programs funded by the Robotics Program experienced measurable improvement in academic performance.
- Any other information DPI deems relevant to evaluation of the Robotics Program.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.