



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2019

[View Online](#)

Governor Wolf and Rural Students Celebrate PAsmart Success for Science and Technology Education

Harrisburg, PA – Celebrating the success of the [PAsmart](#) workforce development program to create educational opportunities at schools across the commonwealth, Governor Tom Wolf welcomed more than 50 students from the [Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative](#) to the Capitol today. The students from nine western Pennsylvania school districts showcased their skills in coding, robotics and drone technology. The Wolf administration awarded the initiative a \$299,000 PAsmart Advancing Grant earlier this year.

“I launched PAsmart as a new way to invest in science and technology education, so students have the knowledge and skills to compete for in-demand, good-paying jobs,” said Governor Wolf. “The Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative shows that whether a student lives in a tech hub like Pittsburgh or a rural town, they can learn about coding and robotics. Programs like this are investing in their future and signaling to businesses that Pennsylvania is ready with the talented workers they need.”

Joining the governor at the Capitol from the Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative were students from Cranberry Area School District, Clarion Area School District, Brookville Area School District, Valley Grove Area School District, Forest Area School District, Redbank Valley School District, DuBois Area School District, Franklin Area School District, Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 and the Venango Technology Center.

“The opportunities presented through our PAsmart award have allowed our member schools to obtain resources that otherwise would not be possible,” said Tim Heffernan, a science teacher from Franklin Area School District in Venango County and leader of the initiative. “As we’ve leveraged those resources and worked with our amazing partners in K12 and higher education, government, industry, workforce and economic development, and the non-profit community, we’ve created opportunities for our students that truly are world-class.”

At the invitation of the governor, student members of the VEX Robotics team showcased their robots and the coding used for autonomous movement. Three student groups also demonstrated the use of coding and drones in career-oriented projects, including agriculture.

The Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative was created in 2018 to develop sustainable world-class educational robotics programming for the children in Clarion, Clearfield, Forest, Jefferson and Venango counties. Last year, more than 1,000 students created 180 robots with industry leaders and professionals from regional academic institutions serving as mentors. The initiative culminates with a final tournament at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative shared the \$299,000 PAsmart grant directly with member schools to support advanced teacher trainings, summer STEM camps for students, and to triple the number of regional high schools in the initiative.

In the inaugural year of PAsmart, the Wolf administration awarded nearly \$10 million in advancing grants, up to \$500,000 each, to 24 schools and community partnerships, including the Pennsylvania Rural Robotics Initiative. An additional \$10 million in PAsmart grants, of up to \$35,000 each, was awarded to 765 schools to expand computer science classes and teacher training. The remaining \$10 million supported apprenticeships and job training. The governor secured \$40 million for PAsmart in the current year budget.

With PAsmart, Pennsylvania is a national leader in STEM and computer science education and accomplishments under Governor Wolf include:

- [Ranking second in the nation](#) for investments in computer science education;
- Advancing Pennsylvania to third in the nation in the number of nationally-recognized STEM ecosystems and made the commonwealth the [fifth largest producer of STEM graduates](#);
- Establishing [standards for computer science education](#) in all Pennsylvania schools;
- Joining the Governors' Partnership for K-12 Computer Science, a bipartisan initiative organized by [Code.org](#), to advance policy, funding, and professional learning for computer science education.

For more information about pursuing an education and career in Pennsylvania at any stage of life, visit [PAsmart](#).

Note: Photos and video from this event will be available at www.pacast.com.

MEDIA CONTACT: J.J. Abbott, 717-783-1116

###