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Navient Foundation helps beam Mount Laurel, N.J., school to the future

MOORESTOWN, N.J., Feb. 24, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Robots are used as toys, on assembly lines and as movie villains, but students at Mount Laurel Hartford School, part of the Mount Laurel School District, have created their own use for these artificially intelligent machines: To support education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, popularly known as STEM.

The STEM-Lego Robotics Course, a nine-week course for sixth-graders at the Mount Laurel Hartford School, brings students together in groups in order to create a Lego robot which they will learn to code to make the robot move and solve a problem, such as navigating through an obstacle course using sensors designed by students. The course, based off of the [Lego Mindstorms](#) program, prepares students for STEM courses offered at the seventh grade level.

"The Mount Laurel School District has been committed to making STEM courses accessible to all students. The grant money we received from Navient Foundation will help us to take our sixth-grade Lego-Robotics course to the next level," said Dr. Sheila Miller, curriculum supervisor, Mount Laurel School District. "We will be using the money to buy Chromebooks which will give our students access to more technology tools to use in class. It is exciting to see one of our STEM courses grow and expand."

Navient Foundation, the company-sponsored philanthropic fund, has contributed \$5,000 to support the program, which will help purchase laptops for students to use while coding their robot.

The course, which started three years ago, is broken into four quarters, enabling all of the nearly 500 sixth grade students at the school to participate in the program.

"The STEM-Lego Robotics Course is a fun and exciting opportunity to get students engaged and eager about the STEM curriculum, which will benefit them not only just in school, but also provide a valuable foundation for college and for career decisions outside of the classroom," said Brian Ventre, director, Navient. "We are pleased to help support this innovative program."

Learn more about the [Mount Laurel School District](#).

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The REM Bot (left) and DomaBot are just a few types of robots that students at the Mount Laurel Hartford School will create.