

RESOLUTION NO. 1

SYNOPSIS

Resolution No. 1 from the Woodbury Board of Education (Gloucester County) (“Woodbury”) proposes **new** policy language to NJSBA’s *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* (P&P). The resolution seeks to promote student participation in interscholastic esports activities and encourages local boards to award varsity letters for such participation.

BACKGROUND

Woodbury has timely filed a resolution seeking to add new language to the P&P. While the resolution, as filed, did not specify a specific file code, File Code No. 6145.2 Interscholastic Competition appears to be an appropriate location for inclusion in the P&P. The operative clause of the filed resolution reads as follows: “The NJSBA believes in supporting the inclusion of scholastic esports as a valuable interscholastic competition that fosters student engagement, teamwork, and academic success. The NJSBA encourages school boards to implement and support esports programs within their schools and to award varsity letters to esports high school participants. Recognizing these students' achievements and contributions not only celebrates their efforts but also ensures they have equitable opportunities to compete for college scholarships and other post-secondary opportunities, similar to their peers in traditional extracurricular activities.”

Woodbury has recently passed a resolution to provide varsity letters for the Spring season for four (4) of its esports teams and will participate with the Garden State Esports organization.

In support of this resolution, Woodbury believes that the growing recognition of emerging activities such as scholastic esports offers a valuable addition to the extracurricular experience and provides significant opportunities for students, as numerous colleges and universities offer scholarships and pathways to higher education and careers. Woodbury contends that over 100 school districts currently offer varsity letters in scholastic esports. Finally, the district believes that providing varsity letters for school-sponsored interscholastic extracurricular esports participants provides a framework for recognizing achievements beyond traditional athletics. Garden State Esports is a non-profit organization that supports and organizes esports competitions throughout the State. This organization was founded during the COVID Pandemic by educators in order to promote all students to grow socially, emotionally and academically. According to Esports, 275 high schools compete with Garden State Esports.

[Home - Garden State Esports](#)

Over 300 school districts have esports programs. For example, Edison Twp., Manasquan High School, Mainland Regional High School, and Morris Hills Regional High School report having very successful esports programs. Additionally, Barnegat School District provides varsity letters for esports, as do many other districts.

RELEVANT STATUTORY AND REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Current law supports the concept that students may be eligible to earn a varsity letter for participation in a school-sponsored interscholastic extracurricular activity. In theory, esports competitions would meet the criteria for students in grades 9 through 12 - if the district creates a policy for such an activity and that activity meets the definition of a “school-sponsored interscholastic extracurricular activity.” The definition in *N.J.S.A. 18A:42-7* indicates that the activity must be a competition in which students compete against other students in districts outside of their district.

The statute makes clear that the intention of the law is not to mandate that a district create or implement such a program or to award varsity letters for same.

N.J.S.A. 18A:42-7 provides:

- a. A school district that includes any grades 9 through 12 shall adopt a policy to provide that a student enrolled in those grades who participates in any school-sponsored interscholastic extracurricular activity that includes competitions in which the student competes against students enrolled in schools outside of the district may be eligible to earn a varsity letter awarded by the district.
- b. Nothing in this act shall be construed to require a school district to award a varsity letter or to establish any school-sponsored, interscholastic extracurricular activity.

RELEVANT NJSBA MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CODE PROVISION

There are no current provisions in NJSBA’s *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* that directly reference the topic of school sponsored interscholastic extracurricular **esport** competitions, the provision of varsity letters for esports or for any particular activity. However, the overall concept supporting the issuance of awards for student performance exists at File Code 6145.2 Interscholastic Competition. The P&P does not address the specific areas in which school districts should award varsity letters but rather encourages districts to recognize students as they deem appropriate.

DISCUSSION

It is well settled that esports is an important and continually emerging area offering significant benefits to students in middle and high school, the trades and higher education. The benefits of esports programs are far-reaching and well-documented throughout New Jersey and beyond. According to Garden State Esports, the esports community provides a genuinely inclusive environment for students, allowing them to feel valued and provides equal opportunities. For example, Garden State Esports reports that 97% of its participants report making at least one new friend and 93% report now having a sense of belonging at school because of esports. More than 75% of students report coming to school more often and trying harder in class because of esports.

It is worthy to note that in December, 2024, the Department of Education issued a Notice of Grant Opportunity for the release of the Esports Industry Career Exploration Grant offered to

districts that create new esports programming at the middle grades level. This grant opportunity recognized the popularity of esports and was offered to increase middle school student awareness. [Date Broadcast Memo; 25-AG49-G06_NGO.docx](#). This grant program was also recognized in NJSBA's updated report on Educational Opportunities for the Career and Technical Learners, dated February 2025. [Report-Committee-on-Educational-Opportunities-for-the-Career-Focused-Learner-2025.Feb..12.pdf](#)

The resolution submitted by Woodbury seeks to insert narrow language into the current P&P File Code, 6145.2 by specifying support for one particular school-sponsored extracurricular activity and supporting the awarding of varsity letters for this activity.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

1. The proposed resolution calls for action that is already permitted by statutory authority.
2. It is well-settled that esports is a worthwhile and beneficial concept in today's educational and career settings.

RECOMMENDATION

The Resolutions Subcommittee recommends approval of this resolution with the following substitute language which would create **new** policy language to be included in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* in File Code 6145.2 – Interscholastic Competition.

The NJSBA believes that local boards of education should exercise existing statutory authority to revise existing interscholastic competition policies to support the inclusion of esports as a valuable interscholastic competition and to award varsity letters to esports high school participants to the extent they deem appropriate.

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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**ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
May 10, 2025**

**The following resolution was received from the
Woodbury Board of Education (Gloucester):**

- WHEREAS, There is a growing recognition that traditional extracurricular activities alone may not fully engage or meet the diverse interests of all students, and there is a need to expand opportunities to include emerging activities like scholastic esports that align with students’ skills and interests, offering a valuable addition to the extracurricular experience by promoting engagement, inclusivity, and academic achievement; and
- WHEREAS, Scholastic esports provide significant opportunities for students, as numerous colleges and universities have established esports programs that offer scholarships and pathways to higher education and careers, and the roles of both esports coaches and players demand a high level of expertise, time commitment, and effort; and
- WHEREAS, Garden State Esports, the governing body for scholastic esports in New Jersey, recommends that school districts adopt policies to provide varsity letters for esports participants, recognizing their contributions and achievements whether esports is seen as a sport or as an extracurricular activity, and noting that over 100 school districts currently award varsity letters under these criteria; and
- WHEREAS, New Jersey Senate Bill S2398, passed in 2017, allows school districts to award varsity letters for school-sponsored, interscholastic extracurricular activities, including competitions against other schools, providing a framework for recognizing achievements beyond traditional athletics; and
- WHEREAS, Providing varsity letters for esports participants can create a more inclusive and equitable school culture, offering all students the pride and recognition of being part of a team, and aligning with similar criteria used for other performance - based competitive activities such as cheerleading and marching band; and

WHEREAS, The Delegate Assembly is the official policy making body of the New Jersey School Boards Association; and

WHEREAS, Education-related policies resulting from prior Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors actions are codified in the NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Woodbury Board of Education proposes the following new policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*:

The NJSBA believes in supporting the inclusion of scholastic esports as a valuable interscholastic competition that fosters student engagement, teamwork, and academic success. The NJSBA encourages school boards to implement and support esports programs within their schools and to award variety letters to esports high school participants. Recognizing these students' achievements and contributions not only celebrates their efforts but also ensures they have equitable opportunities to compete for college scholarships and other post-secondary opportunities, similar to their peers in traditional extracurricular activities, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be placed on the agenda for consideration at the May 10, 2025 Delegate Assembly.

Adopted at a regular meeting of the
Woodbury Board of Education
on February 19, 2025

Nancy L. McCabe
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary