

CURRICULUM-DRIVEN PROCUREMENT

High School Drone Platform Market Scan

Affordable qualifying aircraft, SkyeBrowse video mapping, controller independence, and procurement risk

Technical White Paper

PURPOSE Identify current aircraft that satisfy Level I – Basic Drone Pilot, Level II – Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107), or Level III – Advanced Drone Pilot requirements, can be flown from a dedicated controller without a cellphone, and cost no more than \$10,000 per complete system. SkyeBrowse video mapping removes the need for high-cost survey aircraft.

Blue Ridge Mountain Drones / DronePilotsForUS | July 2026

Executive Findings

Blue Ridge Mountain Drone Education recommends three levels of high school drone courses: 1) Basic Drone Pilot, 2) Remote Drone Pilot (FAA Part 107), and 3) Advanced Drone Pilot (mapping and NFPA 2400). The three courses should not use one aircraft as a forced compromise. Their requirements divide naturally into an indoor training platform, an outdoor camera platform, and an advanced mission/video-mapping workflow. Because SkyeBrowse processes ordinary video through Universal Upload, the Advanced course does not require a survey-grade aircraft, RTK, a mechanical shutter, or an enterprise mapping payload. This expanded scan covers current education, consumer-camera, specialty and sub-\$10,000 professional multirotors found in U.S. and major international markets as of July 2026. Procurement eligibility remains a separate gate from technical suitability.

RECOMMENDED FLEET ARCHITECTURE

- **Level I: CoDrone EDU or a suitable PCS Edventures education package.**
- **Level II: a compact camera drone with an integrated-screen controller.**
- **Level III: use the same affordable camera-drone class to record smooth overlapping video and process it in SkyeBrowse.**
- **No complete aircraft system above \$10,000 should be considered.**

Primary conclusions

- ☐ Do not specify Tello for a new program. It remains useful as legacy equipment, but the line is discontinued and long-term replacement is unreliable.
- ☐ CoDrone EDU matches the Basic course because it supports manual control, stable hover, controlled maneuvers, emergency landing, Blockly/Python, simple autonomous paths, indoor safety, and repairable classroom use. A camera is not required by the Basic standards.
- ☐ Level II requires an aircraft camera and reliable outdoor flight, but not automated mapping. A dedicated controller with its own screen should be mandatory; a controller that merely holds a phone does not meet the requirement.
- ☐ Level III can teach mapping with smooth, overlapping MP4/MOV video captured manually, with the manufacturer's flight app, or with a supported SkyeBrowse Flight App combination. Automated waypoints, RTK and survey cameras are optional rather than purchasing requirements.
- ☐ SkyeBrowse Universal Upload decouples mapping software from aircraft brand. A stable 1080p-or-better video camera and sound capture technique matter more than an enterprise price tag for instructional 2D/3D modeling.

- ❑ Set an absolute ceiling of \$10,000 for one flight-ready system, including its dedicated controller and required camera. Packages above \$10,000 are outside program policy even if technically capable.
- ❑ Price leadership and procurement eligibility are different. DJI remains the strongest value on function, but Chinese manufacture can make it ineligible for federal or state-funded purchases.
- ❑ Section 889 compliance is not the same as NDAA/Blue UAS eligibility or eligibility under the American Security Drone Act. Each solicitation must name the controlling rule.

Recommended shortlist

Course level	Primary recommendation	Restricted-funds path	Planning price
Level I – Basic Drone Pilot	CoDrone EDU; PCS CoDrone, RubiQ or Flex UAV configurations after course-fit review	CoDrone EDU JROTC edition; obtain exact origin certification for PCS packages	\$249 aircraft to \$8,995 classroom package
Level II – Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107)	ATOM 2/PTD-1, Ruko RC3, SKYROVER screen bundles, or a qualifying DJI integrated-screen bundle	ACSL SOTEN + TENSO or another documented eligible system	About \$420 to \$9,999 complete
Level III – Advanced Drone Pilot	Reuse a qualifying Level II video drone with SkyeBrowse; add NFPA 2400-aligned planning and records	SOTEN/TENSO or another documented eligible camera system	Same affordable fleet; never over \$10,000

1. Method and Course Requirement Baseline

This screening used the published DronePilotsForUS Basic Drone Pilot DP01 curriculum, the BRMD-JROTC Level I, Level II, and Level III curriculum guides, the current SkyeBrowse video-mapping workflow, manufacturer specifications, PCS Edventures catalogs, major U.S. retail listings and current federal and state acquisition rules. The search covered education, consumer-camera, specialty and professional multirotors marketed in the United States or major international markets as of July 2026, subject to a \$10,000 complete-system ceiling.

Inclusion requires an actual dedicated controller configuration that can power up, display flight information, launch, fly and land the aircraft without a cellphone. A controller that merely holds a phone, a telemetry-only LCD, goggles/motion-only control, or a laptop/tablet ground station

sold separately does not pass. Because products, bundles and prices change continuously, this is a dated market scan rather than a claim that no unadvertised or newly introduced product exists.

Level I – Basic Drone Pilot

Required capability	Curriculum evidence	Procurement implication
Manual control	Hover, yaw, directional control, takeoff, navigation, landing; Level I adds straight flight, box pattern and precision landing	Stable indoor position hold; physical controller; propeller protection
Controller	User requirement: no cell phone	No Integrated display required but fully functional stick controller is
Safety and inspection	Components, propellers, batteries, preflight, emergency response, flight logging	Visible/replaceable parts; multiple batteries; instructor stop/land capability
Programming (If desired. It is included in our Basic Drone Pilot course Track B)	Sequences, loops, commands, programmed flight path, autonomous execution and troubleshooting	Blockly and/or Python; repeatable autonomous movement
Classroom deployment	Multiple flight labs, simulator option, repeated student use	Indoor-rated, durable, repairable, manageable radio environment
Not required	Photography, gimbal, GNSS mapping, long-range transmission	Do not pay for a camera or mapping system at this level

Level II – Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107)

Required capability	Course task	Minimum platform threshold
Outdoor manual flight	Mission labs, visual-observer duties, search patterns	GNSS position hold, reliable link, RTH, useful endurance
Emergency response	Low battery, lost link, GPS degradation, incursion, approaching aircraft	Configurable failsafe/RTH and clear status information

Required capability	Course task	Minimum platform threshold
Imagery	Stable, relevant photographs/video; angle, altitude, light, motion and privacy	Stabilized camera; still and video capture
Controller	User requirement: no cell phone	Integrated display and flight app on the controller
Mapping	Introductory boundary/overlap planning; mission may be search, imaging or mapping	Stable video suitable for SkyeBrowse is sufficient; automated mapping is not mandatory
Part 107 preparation	Airspace, weather, loading, operations, crew resource management, regulations and aeronautical decision-making	Aircraft supports safe outdoor labs; FAA Remote Pilot certification remains an individual federal credential, not a school-issued certificate

Level III – Advanced Drone Pilot

Required capability	Course task	Minimum platform threshold
Automation	Manual, assisted and optional automated modes; human monitoring and takeover	Safe repeatable orbit/grid capture; waypoints are optional
Route safety	Altitude, speed, overlap, obstacle clearance, reserve and abort criteria	RTH, clear status information, defined capture path and immediate manual control
Capstone	SkyeBrowse mapping, search simulation, campus assessment or community-service request	Smooth overlapping MP4/MOV video, exportable data and defensible mission records
Program management	Aircraft eligibility, maintenance, discrepancies and crew leadership	Remote ID, maintainable fleet, logs and vendor support

Required capability	Course task	Minimum platform threshold
NFPA 2400 alignment	Program administration, risk assessment, crew roles, training, maintenance, records and operational documentation for public-safety scenarios	Documented SOPs, checklists, qualifications, maintenance status and mission records; the course does not claim NFPA certification
Controller	User requirement: no cell phone for aircraft operation	Dedicated controller with integrated screen; a separate school device may be used later for upload and processing

2. Procurement and Country-of-Origin Gate

Technical fit should be evaluated only after the funding source is identified. A district may be legally able to buy a platform with local funds while being unable to buy or operate the same platform with a federal grant. State rules may be narrower or broader.

FEDERAL RULE:

FAR 40.202 states that, on or after December 22, 2025, federal funds may not be used to procure or operate a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system unless an exemption, exception, or waiver applies.

Terms that must not be treated as interchangeable

Claim	What it generally addresses	What it does not prove
Section 889 compliant	Specified telecommunications/video-surveillance equipment and services	It does not by itself establish ASDA, NDAA, Blue UAS, TAA or state eligibility
NDAA compliant	Applicable statutory supply-chain restrictions, often component-specific	It does not automatically place a product on the DIU Blue UAS list
Blue UAS / DIU approved	DoD-vetted platform/configuration	It does not mean the product is affordable or necessary for a school

Claim	What it generally addresses	What it does not prove
Made outside China	Final assembly/country of origin	It does not prove that all restricted components are absent
U.S. company / U.S. data hosting	Ownership or data practice	It does not resolve hardware-source restrictions

National state-law snapshot

The following chart tracks enacted statewide restrictions and selected pending bills verified from official legislative sources as of July 31, 2026. These measures generally govern public entities, public funds, governmental operations or specified critical-infrastructure work; they are not blanket bans on private ownership. A public school district can fall within a statute's definition of public entity or political subdivision, but the exact buyer, funding source, purpose and effective date must be reviewed before purchase.

Jurisdiction / status	Authority	School-relevant effect	Timing / caution
Florida – enacted	Fla. Stat. §934.50	Governmental agencies may purchase only department-approved manufacturers and had to discontinue unapproved drones	State, county, local and municipal governmental entities are included; verify the current approved list
Arkansas – enacted	Act 525 of 2023	Public entities may not purchase covered-foreign-entity drones; operation of covered drones is phased out	China and Russia are covered; operational cutoff May 1, 2027
Tennessee – enacted	Public Chapter 223 (2023)	State, local and law-enforcement agencies may not purchase drones/equipment from manufacturers banned under the FY2019 NDAA	Procurement restriction; confirm whether the district and funding vehicle are within scope
Mississippi – enacted	SB 2853 (2023)	State agencies and political subdivisions face U.S.-manufacture/U.S.-manufacturer purchasing requirements for small UAS	Obtain counsel/procurement confirmation for school-district application and exceptions

Jurisdiction / status	Authority	School-relevant effect	Timing / caution
Kansas – enacted	K.S.A. 75-3740h (2025)	Government agencies may not acquire covered drones, critical components or services produced by countries of concern or foreign principals	Effective July 1, 2025; legacy-use provisions do not authorize a new purchase
Utah – enacted	Utah Code §72-10-1202	Public entities may not buy covered-foreign-entity UAS; operation is restricted, with a narrow critical-infrastructure inspection exception	Effective January 1, 2025; covered entities include China- or Russia-linked parties
North Carolina – pending	SB 670 (2025)	Would restrict state and local acquisition/use of covered foreign drones	Referred to committee; not enacted as of the report date
Ohio – pending	SB 180 (136th General Assembly)	Would prohibit public-entity acquisition and phase out operation of covered foreign drones	Introduced / committee consideration; proposed cutoff May 1, 2027
Missouri – pending	HB 751 (2025)	Would bar acquisition with state funds and later operation of covered foreign drones by public entities	Introduced; proposed operational cutoff May 1, 2027
Washington – pending	SB 5302 (2025–26)	Would restrict state and local acquisition and operation of covered foreign drones	Pending bill text proposes July 1, 2026 restrictions; verify final status before relying on it
West Virginia – pending	HB 5421 (2026)	Would establish covered-foreign-drone restrictions for public entities	Introduced; scope and dates can change during the legislative process
Illinois – pending	SB 3990 (2026)	Would restrict public procurement and operation of covered foreign UAS	Introduced; not enacted as of the report date

LOCAL-GOVERNMENT NOTE: No separate city ordinance is listed without an official, current municipal source. Several statewide laws already reach counties, municipalities, political subdivisions or local agencies. District procurement staff should also check local board policy and grant conditions.

The safe procurement practice is to obtain a written eligibility certification tied to the exact funding source, jurisdiction, model, controller, payload and components. Pending bills should be monitored but must not be described as current law.

3. DP01 Basic Drone Pilot Course Platform Evaluation

Recommended: CoDrone EDU

CoDrone EDU is the strongest direct fit for DP01 Basic Drone Pilot course and the DP04 - JROTC Cadet Drone Operator 8-hour Level I course. Its dedicated handheld controller, optical-flow stabilization, bottom and front range sensors, barometer, protected frame, emergency landing, and Blockly/Python support cover the manual and programmed-flight outcomes. Its 7–8 minute endurance is short but manageable with the included two-battery/dual-charger configuration and station rotation.

Model	Fit	Key strengths	Limitations / funding note
CoDrone EDU JROTC edition	Recommended for DP04 – JROTC Cadet Drone Operator course and restrictive funding	Same flight functions as standard model; 3 batteries; South Korea assembly; manufacturer states Section 889 compliant	\$314.99; indoor only; no camera; still require written eligibility for the funding source
CoDrone EDU standard	Recommended where purchasing rules allow	\$249 current store price; controller; sensors; Blockly/Python; repairable; classroom packs	Made in China according to Robolink; 889 claim alone may not satisfy ASDA/state rules
Crazyflie 2.1+ / DroneBlocks kit	Conditional alternative	27 g; open source; Blockly/Python pathway; Vietnam production now reported; DroneBlocks claims NDAA compliance	Higher per-student cost; computer/radio workflow is less direct for manual pilot evaluation; confirm controller contents
DJI/Ryze Tello	Legacy only	Camera, stable hover, established coding curriculum	Discontinued; Chinese platform; phone/tablet workflow unless third-party controller; poor new-fleet sustainability

DP01 BASIC DRONE PILOT -COURSE DECISION:

Specify the CoDrone EDU JROTC edition as the compliance-first baseline and allow the standard CoDrone only after the buyer confirms it is eligible for the actual funding source. Do not require a camera for DP01.

CoDrone purchasing quantity

A practical ratio is one aircraft per two students, plus 10–15% spare aircraft and a minimum of three flight batteries per active station. The curriculum repeatedly rotates pilot, observer, recorder and leadership roles, so one-to-one aircraft ownership is unnecessary. Budget propellers, motors, frames, AA batteries for controllers, labels, and charging supervision.

Watchlist: CoDrone EDU Plus

Robolink is advertising a forthcoming CoDrone EDU Plus with front and downward cameras, computer-vision activities and a physical camera cover. It could eventually bridge Basic programming and limited imagery instruction, but it should remain a watchlist item until final pricing, availability, manufacturing configuration, controller workflow, privacy controls and technical specifications are published.

PCS Edventures education platforms

PCS Edventures sells complete curriculum packages rather than only bare aircraft. That distinction matters: package price includes curriculum, classroom materials, spares, training resources and—in several configurations—multiple aircraft and radio transmitters. The \$10,000 policy applies to the complete package purchased by the school. Larger packages above the ceiling should be replaced with a smaller configuration or excluded. Check out our link [here](#):

PCS platform or package	Current price / contents	Course fit	Controller and limitation
CoDrone EDU Classroom	\$249 single aircraft; classroom options through \$5,399	Strong Basic programming and indoor-flight fit; Drone Designers uses six CoDrone EDU aircraft	Physical CoDrone controller; laptops/Chrome books are used for coding, not required as a cellphone flight display

PCS platform or package	Current price / contents	Course fit	Controller and limitation
Ready, Set, Drone! 3rd Edition	\$2,995 complete; six mini quadcopters, batteries, chargers and curriculum	Introductory manual flight and safety; designed for grades 4-8, so use in high school only as remediation or a short orientation	Confirm the current package includes one dedicated handheld controller per active aircraft before award
Drone Designers 2nd Edition	\$4,795 complete; CoDrone EDU-based choreography/coding program	Basic Track B enrichment; autonomous programming and engineering design	Dedicated CoDrone controllers; six internet-connected computers are required for Blockly activities
Discover Drones / RubiQ Club	\$3,995; two RubiQ drones, two radio controllers and FPV equipment	Build, configure and manually fly; useful engineering/FPV enrichment, but not a stabilized-camera mapping platform	Dedicated radio controllers; use the \$3,995 or \$8,995 package only—\$18,495 and \$25,995 packages violate policy
Discover Drones / RubiQ Classroom	\$8,995; five RubiQ drones and five radio controllers	Basic/Level I flight, maintenance, radio configuration and crew operations	Under the ceiling; requires Windows configurator and simulator computers for setup/training

PCS platform or package	Current price / contents	Course fit	Controller and limitation
Instructor Drone Kit / RubiQ	\$1,995; one RubiQ, radio controller, two batteries, goggles, tools and curriculum	Instructor preparation or a single build/flight station	Dedicated radio; not a mapping aircraft unless a supported stabilized video payload is added and demonstrated
Drone Pathways / Flex UAV Starter	\$3,995; two Flex UAV kits and three radio transmitters	Grades 10-12; assembly, simulation, VLOS, crew operations and mission planning	Dedicated radios; camera/payload and autonomous-mission expansions are described as planned, so do not score them until available
Drone Pathways / Flex UAV Base	\$8,995; five Flex UAV kits	High-school CTE flight-operations pathway with maintainable modular aircraft	Under the ceiling; verify exact radio count, Remote ID, camera availability and origin before award

PCS DECISION

Include PCS Edventures where its curriculum, repairability and instructor support justify the package cost. The CoDrone, RubiQ and Flex UAV families support Basic or flight-operations instruction; none should be represented as a SkyeBrowse mapping aircraft until the exact configuration records stable MP4/MOV video and passes the acceptance test.

4. DP02 - Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107) Platform Evaluation

Level II course needs a real outdoor camera aircraft, GNSS position hold, RTH/failsafe functions and useful still/video capture, but it does not require automated mapping. Recommended configurations have a dedicated flight controller with its own display and can launch, fly and land without a cellphone. The complete DJI Mini family is shown so schools can distinguish qualifying screen-controller combinations from legacy or phone-dependent bundles. Prices are July 2026 planning figures; sale prices and regional availability change.

Level II: compact and consumer-camera platforms

(Note: this list does not represent an endorsement by Blue Ridge Mountain Drones Education and only presented as research gathered based upon listed specifications and price listings)

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
Potensic ATOM 2 + PTD-1	\$419.99 one-battery; about \$519.99 Fly More	<249 g; about 32 min; 4K/30 video, 48 MP photo, 3-axis gimbal, GNSS and RTH; 5.5-inch controller	Best low-cost non-DJI technical fit. Potensic is a PRC company; not a restricted-funds substitute.
Ruko U11MINI 4K RC3	\$424.99 current retail	<249 g; about 32 min per battery; 48 MP/4K30; 3-axis gimbal; GPS/RTH; 5.5-inch 1080p controller	Meets Level II on published features. Require hands-on acceptance testing, parts/support review and origin disclosure.
Bwine F7MINI 4K RC3	Current retailer quote	<249 g; 48 MP/4K30; 3-axis gimbal/EIS; GPS/RTH; 5.5-inch 1080p controller	Apparent technical fit; closely resembles the Ruko platform. Verify OEM, Remote ID status, support and exact performance.

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
Contixo F29 Altura Max	\$499.99 current retail	<249 g; 23 min; 4K claim; 3-axis gimbal; GPS/RTH; 5-inch screen	Conditional Level II fit. Endurance is below the 25-minute specification and field reports question image/control quality; test before award.
DJI Mavic Mini / standard controller	Used/legacy market only	<249 g; about 30 min; 2.7K; downward sensing; standard controller requires a phone	Included for completeness but does not meet the no-phone gate. Discontinued; not recommended for a new fleet.
DJI Mini SE / standard controller	Used/legacy market only	<249 g; about 30 min; 2.7K; downward sensing; standard controller requires a phone	Does not meet the no-phone gate; legacy/discontinued acquisition only.
DJI Mini 2 / DJI Smart Controller	Used/legacy bundle; quote required	<249 g; about 31 min; 4K/30; GNSS/RTH; Smart Controller is officially compatible	Qualifies only with a supported integrated-screen Smart Controller. Chinese procurement restrictions and aging support apply.

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
DJI Mini 2 SE / standard controller	About \$279-\$339 legacy retail	<249 g; about 31 min; 2.7K; standard RC-N1 requires a phone	Included but fails the dedicated-screen requirement; do not recommend unless a manufacturer-supported screen controller is documented.
DJI Mini 4K / standard controller	About \$299-\$449	<249 g; about 31 min; 4K/30; standard RC-N1C requires a phone	Good low-cost imaging but fails the no-phone gate in its normal configuration.
DJI Mini 3 + DJI RC	About \$419 base; screen-controller package varies	<249 g; up to 38 min; 4K/30; 3-axis gimbal; GNSS/RTH; DJI RC integrated screen	Meets Level II when purchased specifically with DJI RC. Limited sensing; Chinese procurement restrictions.
DJI Mini 3 Pro + DJI RC	Legacy/new-old-stock quote	<249 g; up to 34 or 47 min; 4K/60; forward/back/down sensing; DJI RC	Qualifies with DJI RC; strong imaging and safety bridge, but aging availability and Chinese procurement restrictions apply.

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
SKYROVER S1 screen-controller combo	Screen-combo price must be quoted; aircraft starts at \$289	<249 g; up to 40 min; 4K/60, 48 MP, 3-axis gimbal, forward/down sensing, RTH; 5.5-inch screen	Strong Level II value if the exact screen package is available. Origin and federal/state eligibility are not established; require disclosure.
SKYROVER X1 screen-controller combo	\$989 listed screen combo	<249 g; up to 32 min; 4K/60, 48 MP, 360-degree sensing, RTH; 5.5-inch screen	Excellent compact imaging/safety fit. Treat supply chain and eligibility as unverified, not compliant.
DJI Flip + RC 2	About \$519 aircraft/RC 2; about \$629 Fly More outside U.S.	<249 g; 31 min; 4K/60; guarded propellers; forward/down sensing; 5.5-inch RC 2	Good beginner outdoor camera platform. Limited U.S. availability and Chinese procurement restrictions.
DJI Mini 4 Pro + RC 2	\$719 aircraft/RC 2; \$829-\$879 Fly More	<249 g; 34 or 45 min; 4K/60 HDR; omnidirectional sensing; RTH; 5.5-inch RC 2	Excellent Level II benchmark where Chinese-made aircraft are permitted.
DJI Mini 5 Pro + RC 2	About \$935-\$1,039 Fly More in Canada/global markets	1-inch 50 MP camera; 4K; 36 or 52 min; night omnidirectional sensing; RC 2	Technically excellent. Verify U.S. legal availability and exact price; Chinese procurement restrictions.

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
DJI Mavic Air 2 + Smart Controller	Used/new-old-stock quote	About 34 min; 48 MP; 4K/60; forward/back/down sensing; integrated-screen Smart Controller supported	Qualifies as a legacy Level II/III platform with the Smart Controller. Confirm Remote ID firmware, batteries and support; Chinese procurement restrictions.
DJI Air 2S + Smart Controller	Used/new-old-stock quote	About 31 min; 1-inch 20 MP; 5.4K/30 or 4K/60; forward/back/up/down sensing; Smart Controller supported	Strong legacy imaging platform that meets the no-phone rule with Smart Controller. Confirm batteries/support; Chinese procurement restrictions.
DJI Air 3 + RC 2	About \$1,099 class	46 min; dual 48 MP 4K cameras; omnidirectional sensing; 12 m/s wind rating; RC 2	Excellent but larger and costlier than needed; Chinese procurement restrictions.
DJI Air 3S + RC 2	About \$1,599 Fly More class	45 min; dual-camera 4K system; omnidirectional sensing; 20 km advertised transmission; RC 2	Excellent Level II/imagery bridge; Chinese procurement restrictions.

Platform / controller	Price	Performance and imaging	Course and procurement position
DJI Mavic 4 Pro + RC 2	\$2,049 standard; \$2,799 Fly More	51 min; 100 MP/6K triple-camera system; omnidirectional low-light sensing; RC 2	Far beyond Level II need but outstanding performance; Chinese procurement restrictions.
FIMI X8 Pro 2025 + TX10A	About \$530 aircraft plus controller; obtain package quote	Approximately 40-47 min by battery; 4K gimbal camera; three-direction sensing; 5.5-inch 1000-nit TX10A	Technically suitable. China-based supply chain, import/support uncertainty and restricted-funds risk.

DP02 Remote Drone Pilot course - specialty and enterprise-capable platforms

Platform / controller	Planning price	Performance	Position
SwellPro SplashDrone 4+ / smart controller	\$2,777; currently shown sold out	29 min; 48 MP/4K camera option; 7 km link; waterproof/floating; 5.5-inch screen	Meets Level II technically and adds maritime work, but is expensive, specialized and presently unavailable.
Autel EVO II Pro V3 / Smart Controller SE	Dealer price; typically \$2,000-\$3,000 class	37-39 min; 1-inch 20 MP, 6K; omnidirectional sensing; 6.4-inch OLED controller	Strong Level II/Advanced bridge where available. Autel is Chinese; verify support and funding eligibility.

Platform / controller	Planning price	Performance	Position
Anzu Raptor / included controller	\$5,099 launch price	45 min; 20 MP mechanical-shutter wide plus zoom; omnidirectional sensing; 5.5-inch 1000-nit screen	Excellent Level II and Advanced bridge. Malaysia assembly but Anzu does not claim NDAA compliance.
ACSL SOTEN / TENSO	Under \$10,000 package target; TENSO \$2,800 separately	25-29 min; camera/mission functions; IP43 configuration; integrated HD screen	Best moderately priced compliance-first cross-level candidate; Japan-made and NDAA-oriented.

DP02 REMOTE DRONE PILOT -LEVEL II DECISION

Price leadership now includes ATOM 2 with PTD-1, SKYROVER S1/X1 screen packages, and several DJI RC 2 combinations. None of the low-cost foreign consumer choices should be described as federally eligible without a written model-and-configuration determination.

5. DP03 – Advanced Drone Pilot Platform Evaluation

Level III qualification requires a no-phone controller, RTH/failsafe instruction, immediate manual takeover, smooth overlapping video capture, a usable SkyeBrowse workflow, and NFPA 2400-aligned program-management practice. SkyeBrowse Universal Upload accepts MP4/MOV footage from supported or unsupported drones and even from a phone or action camera. Therefore, automated waypoint planning, RTK and survey payloads are optional enhancements—not reasons to buy a high-dollar aircraft.

Platform / controller	Planning price	Performance and mapping capability	Procurement position
Potensic ATOM 2 / PTD-1	\$419.99-\$519.99	About 32 min; stabilized 4K video; integrated-screen controller; manual orbit/grid video can be uploaded to SkyeBrowse	Lowest-cost advanced video-mapping candidate; Chinese origin and restricted-funds risk.
Ruko U11MINI 4K / RC3	\$424.99 current retail	About 32 min; stabilized 4K video; integrated 5.5-inch controller; Universal Upload workflow	Affordable candidate after video-quality, file-export, parts and support acceptance testing.
SKYROVE R S1 / screen controller	Current screen-combo quote; aircraft starts at \$289	Up to 40 min; stabilized 4K video; integrated screen; manual SkyeBrowse capture	Strong value if exact package, origin, Remote ID and support are verified.
DJI Mini family / qualifying screen controller	About \$419-\$1,039 for current qualifying bundles	Mini 3/3 Pro/4 Pro/5 Pro provide stabilized 4K video with DJI RC/RC 2; Mini 2 can use the older Smart Controller	Excellent affordable mapping capture where DJI is allowed. Standard Mavic Mini, Mini SE, Mini 2 SE and Mini 4K phone-controller bundles fail the controller gate.
DJI Mavic Air 2 or Air 2S / Smart Controller	Used/new-old-stock quote	31-34 min; stabilized 4K60 or 5.4K; integrated-screen Smart Controller; strong SkyeBrowse Universal Upload source	Useful existing-fleet Level III aircraft; verify Remote ID, battery health, support and procurement eligibility.
DJI Mavic 3 Enterprise / RC Pro Enterprise	About \$5,000 complete class	45 min; 20 MP mechanical shutter; mapping missions; optional RTK; omnidirectional sensing	Best mapping value where Chinese platforms are permitted; restricted-funds risk.

Platform / controller	Planning price	Performance and mapping capability	Procurement position
DJI Matrice 4E / RC Plus 2 Enterprise	About \$5,000-\$7,000 class, quote	49 min; mechanical-shutter mapping camera; RTK and automated routes; integrated-screen controller	Very strong advanced platform; Chinese procurement restrictions.
Anzu Raptor / included 5.5-inch controller	\$5,099 launch price	45 min; 20 MP mechanical shutter; RTK option; mapping/preset missions; 4K imagery	Excellent function/price; Malaysia assembly with disclosed non-NDAA status.
ACSL SOTEN / TENSO	Under \$10,000 target package	25-29 min; waypoint missions; resume-from-waypoint; swappable camera; Remote ID	Practical compliance-first choice; require reseller demonstration of the complete mapping workflow.
Autel EVO II RTK V3 / Smart Controller V3	Dealer quote; about \$6,000-\$8,000 class	36 min class; RTK; 1-inch camera; mission planning and mapping; integrated display	Technically strong; Autel is Chinese and may be ineligible under restricted funding.

Mapping requirement clarification

The Advanced course should teach capture planning, safe flight, overlap, video quality, upload, model review, measurement, export and presentation. SkyeBrowse Universal Upload processes standard MP4/MOV footage from virtually any drone and can also use smartphone or action-camera video. This means the school can reuse an affordable Level II camera drone instead of purchasing a separate mapping aircraft. RTK, thermal, mechanical shutters and large enterprise payloads are unnecessary unless a separate survey-grade or public-safety requirement is formally added.

NFPA 2400 instructional alignment

NFPA 2400 addresses small-UAS public-safety operations. Level III should use it as an operational-readiness framework: establish program authority and policy; identify crew positions and qualifications; conduct pre-mission risk assessment and airspace/weather review; use briefing, launch, lost-link, emergency and post-flight checklists; track batteries, maintenance and discrepancies; protect mission data; and complete flight, incident and after-action records. Classroom completion does not confer NFPA certification, public-safety authority or an FAA credential.

ACCURACY BOUNDARY:

- A SkyeBrowse classroom model is appropriate for instruction, visualization, documentation and measurement exercises.
- It must not be represented as a boundary survey, engineering survey or legally authoritative measurement unless the project uses the required professional controls, accuracy validation and licensed oversight.

Recommended advanced acquisition sequence

- ☐ First test SkyeBrowse with the lowest-cost qualifying Level II camera aircraft already under consideration. Record a smooth orbit or grid in MP4/MOV, retain the original file and telemetry when available, upload it and inspect the resulting model.
- ☐ Buy no dedicated mapping aircraft until that inexpensive workflow fails a written instructional requirement. Do not upgrade merely to obtain RTK, a mechanical shutter or enterprise branding.
- ☐ If restricted funds apply, evaluate ACSL SOTEN/TENSO or another fully documented eligible camera configuration, but require a flight-ready price below \$10,000 and the same video-export demonstration.
- ☐ Use a school-managed computer or tablet for SkyeBrowse upload and processing. The no-cellphone rule applies to flying the aircraft; it does not prohibit a separate school device from being used after flight.
- ☐ Reject any aircraft, payload or required-controller bundle whose flight-ready total exceeds \$10,000.

6. Other Drones Evaluated but Not Included as Qualifying

The market search also found many aircraft that are useful in other settings but fail at least one requirement in the configuration normally sold. These exclusions make the market boundary auditable and prevent a phone-dependent package from being mistaken for a qualifying package.

Platform or family	Reason excluded from qualifying list	Reconsider only if
DJI/Ryze Tello, Tello EDU and RoboMaster TT	Discontinued and normally dependent on a phone/tablet app; unsuitable as a sustainable new-fleet standard	Existing inventory is being supported as a legacy fleet
DroneBlocks Crazyflie classroom platform	Excellent coding platform, but the normal workflow uses a computer/web app and radio rather than an independent dedicated flight controller	The school accepts a computer-mediated controller for Basic

Platform or family	Reason excluded from qualifying list	Reconsider only if
LiteBee Wing	Programming and physical-controller functions exist, but U.S. education listings show closeout/sold-out status and supply-chain continuity is weak	A supported current package, spares and controller are contractually guaranteed
DJI Mini 2 SE, Mini 4K and phone-controller bundles	Common packages require a cellphone for live flight information	A compatible integrated-screen controller is explicitly included and supported
DJI Neo / Neo 2	RC 2 compatibility can remove the phone, but 18-19 minute endurance and limited camera stabilization fall below the Level II specification	The district intentionally lowers endurance and imagery thresholds
Potensic ATOM/ATOM SE and ATOM 2 standard controller	Standard packages use a phone; PTD-1 is confirmed only for the ATOM 2 configuration evaluated above	A manufacturer-supported integrated-screen controller is included
Holy Stone HS-series screen-telemetry controllers	Built-in LCDs generally show telemetry but still require the phone app for live camera view and intelligent functions	The exact package demonstrates complete no-phone flight and image workflow
Contixo F23 and generic H11/K19 screen-controller drones	No-phone operation is advertised, but stabilized imagery, endurance, Remote ID, parts and institutional support are insufficiently documented	A live acceptance test and enforceable support/origin documentation close every gap
Parrot ANAFI Ai / Skycontroller 4	Requires a connected smartphone or tablet display in the normal configuration	A dedicated integrated-display controller is offered and supported
Sony Airpeak S1	Remote control workflow depends on a connected mobile device	A supported integrated-display controller becomes available

Platform or family	Reason excluded from qualifying list	Reconsider only if
Any complete system priced above \$10,000	Program policy now sets a hard ceiling; SkyeBrowse video mapping makes the additional aircraft cost unnecessary	The governing program policy is formally changed for a separate specialized course
DJI Matrice 30/350/400, Parrot ANAFI USA GOV, Skydio X10, IF800 and Astro Max	Typical complete configurations exceed the \$10,000 ceiling and are unnecessary for SkyeBrowse instructional mapping	Not reconsidered for this high-school program
PCS Discover Drones Premium and Drone Pathways Plus/Pro packages	Published package prices exceed \$10,000	A smaller PCS configuration under \$10,000 meets the same defined instructional need
AgEagle eBee, WingtraOne and other fixed-wing VTOL systems	Outside the multirotor/manual-maneuver course design and generally use tablet/laptop ground stations	The Advanced course is redesigned around fixed-wing mapping
FPV/racing, agricultural spray, cargo and tethered drones	Do not match the curriculum's stabilized camera, manual pattern, or mapping tasks and introduce materially different safety requirements	A separate specialized course is approved

7. Recommended Procurement Specification

Level I – Basic Drone Pilot specification

- ☐ Indoor micro-quadcopter, less than 250 g, with full propeller guards and optical-flow-assisted stable hover.
- ☐ Dedicated handheld controller included; manual takeoff, hover, yaw, directional flight, landing and emergency land.
- ☐ Blockly and Python support for sequences, loops, commands and programmed flight paths.
- ☐ At least two batteries per kit; three preferred; field-replaceable propellers and available motors/frames.
- ☐ Manufacturer/reseller must state assembly country and certify eligibility for the named funding source.

Level II – Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107) specification

- ☐ GNSS camera quadcopter with stabilized still/video capture, Remote ID, RTH and configurable lost-link/low-battery response.
- ☐ Dedicated remote controller with integrated display and preinstalled flight application; no personal phone required for flight.
- ☐ Minimum 25-minute advertised flight time, spare-battery kit and current manufacturer support.
- ☐ Image export to school-managed storage without requiring a student's personal account or device.

Level III – Advanced Drone Pilot specification

- ☐ All Level II capabilities plus safe orbit/grid capture planning, RTH altitude, failsafe, manual takeover and repeatable overlapping video collection.
- ☐ Dedicated controller with integrated screen; no personal cellphone required for aircraft flight.
- ☐ Records stable 1080p-or-better MP4/MOV video and permits export of the original file to a school-managed device for SkyeBrowse Universal Upload.
- ☐ Waypoint automation, telemetry sidecars, RTK, thermal, mechanical shutters and higher IP ratings may be scored as optional features but may not justify exceeding the \$10,000 ceiling.
- ☐ Flight-ready aircraft, required camera and dedicated controller must total no more than \$10,000.
- ☐ Program documents and scenario labs address NFPA 2400-aligned administration, risk assessment, crew roles, training, maintenance, checklists and mission records.

8. Final Recommendation

Adopt a two-track recommendation for every course level: a best-value technical option and a restricted-funds option, both below \$10,000. Use SkyeBrowse as the mapping layer rather than buying a separate enterprise mapping fleet. This preserves procurement flexibility while preventing an inexpensive but ineligible platform from being purchased with restricted money.

FINAL SELECTION

- **Level I – DP01 Basic Drone Pilot:**
CoDrone EDU JROTC edition or a qualifying PCS Edventures CoDrone, RubiQ or Flex UAV package no higher than \$10,000.
- **Level II – DP02 Remote Drone Pilot (Part 107):** compare ATOM 2/PTD-1, Ruko U11MINI RC3, SKYROVER S1/X1 and qualifying DJI integrated-screen bundles.
- **Level III – DP03 Advanced Drone Pilot:** reuse the selected Level II camera drone, process smooth MP4/MOV video in SkyeBrowse, and apply NFPA 2400-aligned operational practices.
- **For restricted funds, compare SOTEN/TENSO or another fully documented eligible configuration. Never consider a flight-ready system priced above \$10,000.**

Before award, require a live vendor demonstration using the course acceptance test: manual maneuvers, emergency procedures, camera capture, controller independence, original MP4/MOV export, SkyeBrowse upload and model review, battery turnaround, replacement parts and documentation. Product brochures should not substitute for a curriculum-based acceptance test.

Appendix A. Course Acceptance Test

Test	Basic	Level II	Advanced
Controller independence	Handheld controller; computer only when coding	Integrated screen; no phone	Integrated screen; no phone
Manual flight	Hover, yaw, directional, box, precision land	Level I plus search pattern and stable imaging	Level II plus smooth orbit/grid video and failsafe demonstration
Emergency	Emergency land / instructor stop	Low battery, lost link, GNSS degradation, RTH	Failsafe configuration, RTH altitude, manual takeover
Data	Flight log	Still/video export	Original MP4/MOV export, SkyeBrowse upload and model review

Test	Basic	Level II	Advanced
Programming / mission	Blockly/Python programmed path	Not required	Capture plan required; waypoint automation optional
Sustainment	Props, motors, frames, batteries	Batteries, props, firmware/support	Batteries, payload/controller support, software compatibility
Compliance file	Origin and funding certification	Same plus Remote ID	Same plus component/configuration certification

Appendix B. Sources

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Prices are planning figures observed from manufacturer or vendor pages in July 2026 and must be reconfirmed at quotation. Procurement discussion is operational guidance, not legal advice.