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District III

Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia

Last summer, I was contacted by Secondary Curriculum Coordinator Grant Spencer of the Harrison County Schools, in Clarksburg, West Virginia. He asked if I would participate in a STEAM program called Sparking the Aerospace Fire. The event would have 25 students and teachers from five middle schools in the county.

I called my friend, Ed Waske, a modeler and the owner of a full-scale aviation repair facility in the area, to see if he could help and he said he would be glad to. The goal of this event was to educate the students of the tremendous career potential available today in aviation.

I contacted AMA Education Director Kyle Jaracz, for advice on how to proceed. We decided that the Foam Plate Glider 9 (FPG9) would be the best project. In addition, I created a PowerPoint presentation that helped teach basic aerodynamics and explained how model aviation has encouraged famous aviators such as astronaut Neil Armstrong, Burt Rutan, and others.



The students and teachers are test-flying their gliders. Lots of fun!



Hayden Pitts, of South Harrison Middle School, won an AMA Alpha for the longest glider flight.



Class began with a PowerPoint presentation about model aviation, jobs in aviation, basic aerodynamics, and a question-and-answer session.



Ed Waske, AMA member and aviation business owner (L) explains weight and balance to a student and a teacher.

Ed brought one of his employees, Mike Gray, to speak to the students about the career opportunities in aviation. Ed and I brought several models and utilized them to explain lift, drag, the controls, etc.

After the initial PowerPoint presentation and a brief question-and-answers session, it was time to have some fun building and flying the gliders. The FPG9 is one of the simplest, easiest, least expensive, and most productive aviation learning tools available to teach students how an airplane flies. They only require some tape to assemble and a penny for nose weight.

After several minutes of assembly, the students test-flew their gliders in the room. The FPG9 has elevons and a rudder so it can be trimmed to fly straight, circles, climb, etc. We helped the students trim their airplanes to fly and then held a little competition to see whose aircraft would glide the farthest. It was fun to listen and see the student's satisfaction knowing they had made an airplane that flies.

Next, we went outside on the school property and I flew a small RC foamie and a drone to educate the students about the rules of flying. After flying, the school had a pizza lunch for everyone.

The future of aviation, whether it is model or full scale, will be the students who are in our schools today. Model aviation can have a significant impact on the future of aviation. As AMA members and model aviation experts, it is important that we help educate the students of today for the future of aviation.

If your club would like to do a similar project for a school, contact Kyle at kylej@modelaircraft.org for further information.

Until next month, fly safely, fly AMA.