



## Ventura County students take flight with new TECH Center Experience

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Hunter Browneller, right, a student from Ventura College acts as the Naval Flight Officer while Trevor Goor from Camarillo High School pilots an F-35 Joint Strike Fighter simulator at the Ventura County TECH (Test and Evaluation Collaboration Hub) Center in Camarillo, Calif. The TECH Center integrates education with Navy aviation test simulators, allowing students to get hands on experience while providing test and evaluation data. (U.S. Navy photo)

**CAMARILLO, Calif.** – Ventura County students have a new tool to spark and develop their interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics: the Test and Evaluation Collaboration Hub, or TECH Center, at the Ventura County Career Education Center in Camarillo, California.

The TECH Center, which opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony Sept. 27, is one of just three such classrooms in the country and is the first in California. It was established as the result of a collaborative effort involving the Ventura County Office of Education, Oxnard Union High School District, the Ventura County Civic Alliance, the Department of Defense and Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division.

“Our vision is to get kids excited about science, technology, engineering and mathematics,” said Dr. David Brown, deputy assistant secretary of defense for developmental testing and evaluation, who spoke during the ceremony. “It takes a village to make something like this happen; it takes a village to keep it alive.



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“As the T&E guy, I’m so happy that you’ve chosen test and evaluation as the STEM vehicle for this classroom,” he added.

The TECH Center creates an immersive learning environment using simulators to focus on aviation test and evaluation scenarios. Students will plan tests, conduct flights, evaluate data and maintain air traffic control all within the confines of the laboratory. The equipment, some of it on loan thanks to educational partnership agreements in place with NAWCWD, will serve students throughout the county.

Ultimately, the TECH Center is designed to help prepare students for the workforce or college by exposing them to new career paths as well as teaching creative problem solving skills – skills that are critical, according to Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Stan Mantooth.

“We were in a meeting with a number of members of the business community and one of the comments [we heard] was ‘We need kids who can solve problems,’” he said. “What is this TECH Center if not a magnet for the most creative, collaborative and inquisitive kids we’ve got?”

Rich Burr, NAWCWD’s STEM champion as well as director of Threat/Target Systems Department, noted that problem-solvers are in high demand in the federal government as well as industry. Triggering a love of STEM topics is great, but getting students hands-on experience solving problems is even better.

“Even when we get a student directly out of a college engineering program, we still have to spend years teaching them how to think and do test and evaluation,” Burr said. “With experiences like this, students are better prepared to step into the workforce, even if it’s not with the Navy.”

For the many educators present, preparing students for what comes after graduation is just as important as making sure they graduate.

“Commencement is just that: a beginning,” said Dr. Penelope DeLeon, Oxnard Union High School District superintendent. “We have to be sure that the students who graduate on Friday know what they’re going to be doing on Monday. That they have a plan.”

Students are already lined up to use the TECH Center, with middle, high and college-level students already scheduled starting in October. The Center expects to serve approximately 120 students this fall, expanding to support 200 more in the spring.

One group of students, already participants in the Career Education Center’s aviation programs, got a jump start with program and demonstrated the technology for ceremony attendees.

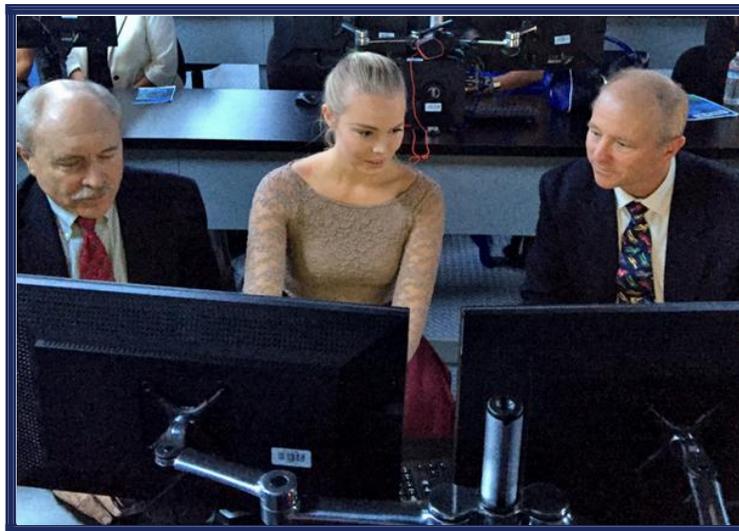


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Even the T&E guy, Brown, got some instruction, courtesy of Ventura College student Hunter Browneller, who walked him and Burr through the classroom's program, flying a simulated F-35 aircraft from nearby Camarillo Airport.

"It's so neat that students are getting this opportunity in our community," said Oxnard City Councilmember Bryan MacDonald, "and it's great that the federal government was able to participate and help it all come together."



Dr. David Brown, deputy assistant secretary of defense, left, and Rich Burr, NAWCWD's director of Threat/Target Systems, right, get a lesson in simulated flight from Ventura College student Hunter Browneller during the ribbon cutting ceremony of the Ventura County Career Center's newest classroom, the Test and Evaluation Collaboration Hub (TECH) Center, on Sept. 27. (U.S. Navy photo)



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Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Developmental Testing and Evaluation Director, Test Resource Management Center, Dr. David Brown, center, joins Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Stanley Mantooh, second right, California Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin, second left, and other local officials, in cutting the ribbon to officially open the Ventura County TECH (Test and Evaluation Collaboration Hub) Center in Camarillo, California. The TECH Center integrates education with Navy aviation test simulators, allowing students to get hands on experience while providing test and evaluation data. (U.S. Navy photo)