NAVAIR
Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey

PRESS RELEASE

Telephone: (732) 323-2811
(732) 323-1079
FAX: (732) 323-1104

News Release: 6-3
Date: 9 June 2011
www.navair.navy.mil/lakehurst

Contact: Thomas Worsdale, Public Affairs Officer
Lawrence Lyford, Deputy Public Affairs Officer

NAVAIR program starts to reach K-12th grades

June 9, 2011, Lakehurst, NJ: Within one week, sixth grade students from Lakehurst Elementary School and senior physics students from Manchester High School experienced different versions of the same Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) program to stimulate interest in math and science employing technology used at the base.

Lakehurst Elementary school students from David La Veglio's and Gina Narozniak's 6th grade class not only got to board a 20 foot high, 300 foot long 1/4 scale model of a WWII aircraft carrier housed in Hanger 1, but saw demonstrations in the Navy's robotics and 3-D Immersion laboratories.

Afterward, they built their own catapults and then competed with each other for distance and accuracy. Protective eye goggles and soft mini marshmallows assured everyone's safety. "It's just part of the Navy's STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) program, to bring real-life science, technology, engineering and math to students," said Gaetan Mangano, NAVAIR Lakehurst's Educational Outreach Coordinator. "Especially at this age, kids get enthusiastic about science and math, or they cringe and struggle with both for another six years, or worse, they avoid them and limit career options."

For Mangano, having elementary school youngsters meet and interact with real engineers and scientists, experience NAVAIR laboratories and their cutting edge technologies and having a fun, hands-on experience building their own catapult, will engender a curiosity and comfort around science and math."

Pat White's physics students from Manchester High School who arrived with an interest in science and math were at the upper end of the program's reach. For them, it could help them make the link between the cutting edge technology used by NAVAIR Lakehurst and technical careers anywhere at the end of their college studies. "Colleges speak in terms of curriculum, we filled the gap and demonstrated physics, engineering and computer science as it is practiced after college," said William Borkowsky, from the educational outreach office. "This program uses our resources on site to demonstrate as well as explain."

One of the Manchester High School students, Kayla Hannon, was the 2011 Naval Civilian Manager's Association Scholarship Winner weeks earlier.

Cutline for #53: After visiting NAVAIR Lakehurst manufacturing and prototyping areas and laboratories, Lakehurst Elementary School sixth grade students construct working catapults for class competition.

Cutline for #84: Manchester High School senior physics students learn tolerances and principles for the trigger (stopper looking valve part) of the steam catapults that launch aircraft from aircraft carriers.

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