



Spring/Summer 2026 Newsletter

Cruising into the Summer!



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A Message from the Editor

By: Mike Miller

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 edition of the New Aviation Education Council Newsletter!

We have and continue to do an amazing job of providing students with the knowledge and skills that they will need to be successful in the field of aviation.

From Aviation Days to engaging guest speakers, the sky is truly the limit on what we provide our students! In addition, I am truly excited to hear that several districts are considering establishing an aviation program at their schools. In this newsletter, I have included a section titled upcoming events. If you have an upcoming aviation/stem themed event, please let me know so I can include it in the newsletter.

As part of our mission at the New Jersey Aviation Education to promote the field of aviation to the next generation, I have established a new section of the newsletter titled “Aviation Students Hall of Fame.” This section celebrates the successes of our collective efforts and serves to demonstrate the viability of establishing aviation programs in high schools.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Mike Gotfried, Dr. Carmelita Graham, Lt. Col. Michael Castania, Ms. Michelle Stella Riordan and Ms. Janis Keown-Blackburn for contributing articles for this newsletter. I want to wish you all a happy and relaxing summer season and I look forward to another school year filled with innovative ideas and programs!



Aviation Day Brings Students Together to Explore Careers at Roxbury High School

By: Dr. Mike Gottfried

Eight Schools and 150 Students Participate in Drone Challenges and Aviation Career Fair

Roxbury High School hosted students from eight New Jersey high schools for Aviation Day, a hands-on program designed to introduce students to careers in aviation, connect students with peers in other aviation programs, and provide exposure to training and internship opportunities in the field. Organized by Roxbury High School in partnership with Morris Hills Regional District, the event brought together approximately 150 high school students from Roxbury, Morris Hills, Boonton, Hoboken, Manville, Morris Knolls, Mountain Lakes, Franklin Township, and academy students. "Programs like Aviation Day are about opening doors and giving students real exposure to an industry that offers strong career pathways and critical workforce needs," said Keith Bigora, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education for Morris Hills Regional District. "By bringing schools and industry partners together, we're helping students explore what's possible." Students participated in a drone obstacle course and flight simulations, followed by an aviation career fair featuring nearly 20 organizations. Participants connected with the industry aviation career fair featuring nearly 20 organizations. Participants connected with industry professionals and completed a "passport" activity for a chance to win one of nine free introductory flights donated by local aviation organizations. "Aviation Day brings learning to life," said Kristin Mongelli, Supervisor of Science, Visual Arts, and Engineering, Design, and Technology for the Roxbury Township School District. "We're proud to host this event and give students the chance to apply what they learn in the classroom and start seeing themselves in these careers." During lunch, students heard from Anna Stanaback, an admissions recruiter for Pennsylvania College of Technology, which offers a range of aviation programs. The day concluded with the ribbon cutting ceremony for the donation of a Cessna 150 by John Merizier and Todd Parks of Cloudscape Adventures, LLC to Roxbury High School. After the aircraft experienced an engine failure in Bryce Canyon, Utah, the owners chose to donate rather than repair it, giving it a second life in education. Students will use the aircraft to practice preflight inspections, learn flight controls, and study aircraft systems, including engine operations. Introductory flights were donated by Air Fleet (Caldwell), American Flyers (Morristown), Liftoff Pilot Academy (Lincoln Park), Jersey Ridge Soaring & Aero Club Albatross (Blairstown), and Orlandi Flight Center (Blairstown). Roxbury Public Schools would like to thank those who were instrumental in supporting the day's program: Dr. Frank Santora and the Roxbury Board of Education; the Roxbury

Administration including Principal Mr. William Crispino; Morris County Vocational School of Technology; Assemblyman Michael Inganamort; Roxbury Town Council; John Shortino; Andrew Bieler and Wright Wrench Aviation; John Harrington from Harrington & Sons Contracting; and Frank Hunkele from Sparta Redi-Mix.



Sky's the Limit: Atlantic County Students Study Aviation and Aerospace, putting them on pathway to success...

Before AOPA's Four-Year High School Aviation Curriculum, there was Atlantic County Institute of Technology's "Home Grown" Four-Year High School Aviation Program...

By: Lt.Col. Michael Castania

The Atlantic County Institute of Technology (ACIT) aviation program launched in the 2016–2017 school year as a "home-grown" four-year Academy of Aviation Studies. It was developed to meet the growing demand for local aerospace and aviation professionals by partnering with Atlantic Cape Community College for dual-enrollment and career-focused learning.

The school administrator at the Atlantic County Institute of Technology (ACIT) who spearheaded the aviation curriculum at that time was Jamie Moscony, at the time member of the NJ Aviation Education Council as well as a Civil Air Patrol Aerospace Education Member program. She recognized the high demand for aviation careers in New Jersey and was instrumental in developing ACIT's unique Aviation Studies program.

ACIT offers a specialized Academy of Aviation Studies that prepares students for careers in the aerospace, aeronautical, and aviation industries. The curriculum is structured to blend high school requirements with college-level courses, certifications, and hands-on professional experiences.

“When diversifying an economy like we are in Atlantic County, having the right partners makes all the difference,” said Lauren Moore, president of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance. “Our excellent relationship with ACIT, and with other important partners like Atlantic Cape Community College and the Atlantic County Workforce Development Board, gives us the opportunity to show our communities the exciting and fulfilling careers that are available to them in new sectors like aviation, right here at home. Plus, having a trained and ready workforce is critical in attracting new businesses to the region. Everyone wins.”

The program was Developed as a Collaborative Initiative in Partnership with Atlantic Cape Community College and Local Industry Employers to Prepare Students for the Aerospace and Aeronautical Industries.

It was launched with the help of a state grant when Atlantic County identified aviation as a key growth industry to help diversify its economy. The curriculum was initially

created as a dual-enrollment partnership with Atlantic Cape Community College. Students receive practical, hands-on training, such as building aircraft through a NASA Space Consortium grant and learning flight operations. It has since evolved to include concurrent enrollment and STEM-focused courses through Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Today, from sophomore year forward, students participate in a concurrent enrollment program hosted by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, allowing them to earn college credits in rigorous STEM-related courses.

- Students prepare for industry-recognized certifications, such as the Remote Pilot Airman Certificate (Part 107) for small UAS (drones) and/or Private Pilot Certification.
- Students engage in a monthly mentorship program with professionals at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center.
- Through a NASA Space Consortium grant, the aviation club actively builds and maintains a Vans RV-7A aircraft.

Today, ACIT, offers a four-year, full-time comprehensive program integrating rigorous academic studies (AP, Honors, and Dual Enrollment) with specialized Career and Technical Education (CTE). Students graduate with both a high school diploma and valuable industry certifications, prepared for immediate careers, military service, or higher education.

The Core Structure...

- The "Whole Student" Approach: Unlike traditional high schools, ACIT's daily schedule balances high-level academics with hands-on, authentic technical lab experiences.
- Career Academies & Majors: Students choose from dozens of specific career areas, ranging from STEM and Health Sciences to Aviation, Culinary Arts, and Trade skills.
- Work-Based Learning: Upperclassmen can participate in co-ops, job shadowing, and paid internships, directly tying their lab skills to real-world employment.

Academics & College Prep...

- College Credit: Through articulation agreements with institutions like Stockton University and Atlantic Cape Community College, students can earn up to 15 college credits before graduating.

- **Advanced Coursework:** The curriculum features a full roster of Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses, ensuring students meet and exceed all New Jersey graduation requirements.

State-of-the-Art Facilities...

Students benefit from modern, industry-aligned facilities as ACIT officially opened a new \$53.5 million Career and Technical Education (CTE) building on May 15. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the 133,000-square-foot facility marked a major milestone for vocational education in the region.

Partnerships...

ACIT also partners with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University for a specialized aviation concurrent enrollment program. This partnership allows high school students to follow the university's curriculum and graduate with 18 to 20 transferable college credits.

The Program Provides...

- **College Acceleration:** Students earn college credit and prepare for industry certifications such as the Remote Pilot Airman Certificate (Part 107).
- **Career Pathways:** It introduces multiple career options, including aviation maintenance, airport management, and aeronautical engineering.
- **Real-World Training:** The aviation studies curriculum is bolstered by local industry partnerships—including direct collaboration with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance (ACEA)—to build a strong pipeline to high-paying aerospace careers.

What Makes ACIT's Aviation Curriculum Unique?

- **The "Whole Student" Approach:** Unlike traditional schools, our schedule seamlessly integrates high-level academic courses (AP/Honors/Dual Enrollment) with hands-on, authentic CTE lab experiences. You don't have to choose—you get the best of both worlds.
- **College and Career Ready:** Our graduates are prepared for immediate employment, military service, and successful transition to four-year universities. The critical thinking and problem-solving skills learned in both academics and the technical labs make our students highly competitive candidates for their next step.
- **Industry-Driven Programs:** Our technical programs are developed and advised by leading professionals in New Jersey industries to ensure students are learning the most current, relevant, and in-demand skills.

Students enroll in ACIT's Aviation Studies program to gain a competitive edge in aerospace. They accomplish this through dual-enrollment college credits, career-ready certifications, and exclusive mentorship opportunities at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center. Students participate in a concurrent enrollment program with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to tackle rigorous, college-level STEM courses while in high school. The program helps students qualify for valuable credentials before graduation, such as the Private Pilot Certification and the Remote Pilot Airman Certificate (Part 107) for commercial drone operation. Juniors and seniors spend class time directly at the National Aerospace Research and Technology Park (NARTP). They participate in monthly mentorship programs alongside engineers and researchers at the nearby FAA Technical Center at Atlantic City International Airport. Beyond just flight training, the program exposes students to a variety of lucrative aerospace pathways, including air traffic control, aerospace engineering, airport management, and space flight.

Congratulations on Ten Years of Continued Success...

NJWG (Civil Air Patrol) Director of Aerospace Education and former NJ Aviation Education Council Executive Director, Lt Col Michael Castania, has been a part of ACIT's program since its inception and currently serves on the school's Aviation Advisory Board.



American Airlines Cadet Academy “Lands” at Raritan High School!

By: Mike Miller

On May 27th, Mr. Brandon Jennings from American Airlines Pilot Recruitment spoke to our Advanced Aviation students about American Airlines Cadet Academy. This academy provides a direct, structured pathway for aspiring pilots to transition from zero flight experience to a commercial airline cockpit.

The American Airlines Cadet Academy partners with flight schools across the country to offer standardized, high-quality training. Cadets train in a rigorous, airline-focused environment designed to prepare them for the demands of commercial aviation.



Flight Day Takes Learning to New Heights at Joy D. Miller Elementary School

By: Dr. Carmelita Graham

On Monday, May 18, 2026, fifth-grade students at Joy D. Miller Elementary School in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey participated in an exciting Flight Day experience. Flight Day provides students with the opportunity to engage in aviation-related activities while exploring a variety of careers within the aviation industry.

Throughout the day, students rotated through several interactive learning stations. One station featured the construction of model airplanes made from balsa wood, with materials generously donated by the Civil Air Patrol. At another station, students used Ozobot robots to map rocket flight paths, combining aviation concepts with technology and coding skills.

Students also enjoyed launching stomp rockets in the gymnasium, providing a fun and engaging way to learn about flight principles. The day concluded with an outdoor drone-flying activity led by the school's JROTC instructor, who also works with the high school's cadet drone team. This hands-on experience gave students a unique opportunity to learn about drone technology and its growing role in aviation.

Flight Day offers students an engaging blend of science, technology, engineering, and aviation exploration, inspiring curiosity and exposing them to potential future career pathways.











New Jersey Aviation Hall of Fame Museum

By: Janis Keown-Blackburn

There's a hidden gem at Teterboro Airport. It's called the NJ Aviation Hall of Fame or NJAHOF. A building at the base of the old tower (they just finished a new one last October. The museum opened in a small building on the other side of the field in 1972 and was relocated many years later to its larger home.

Before pulling into the parking lot you see a Lockheed LASA-60 bush plane and a Coast Guard Sikorsky helicopter sitting there in front of you.

Inside the building there are two floors of displays depicting the history of aviation in New Jersey. The Steve Riethof memorial room is where your visit begins with an eleven minute movie talking about the many firsts here in NJ. There's also a display of early Civil Air Patrol items. If you are a veteran the posters on the wall are there for you to sign.

The hall of fame room honors the aviation pioneers who either grew up in NJ or have lived in the state for many years. Each year three or four new inductees are honored and join the likes of many famous and many not so famous. But all have contributed to aviation in one way or another. Two MAFC members were honored in past years to join the such a distinguished group.

The great room holds everything from the world's first hover craft to a display of space and information about people who grew up in NJ and became astronauts. There's a film with astronauts showing how they live on the ISS. The room holds aircraft and rocket engines built here and there's a piece of the Hindenberg. Actually, the museum has two pieces, one of which are taken to school groups and group talks where it can be passed from person to person. There's a hot air balloon basket for anyone who can climb in for that photo op. The kids love to do this. We older kids stand beside it for a photo op. Dassault built a fundamental flight exhibit in which the children can fly an airplane in a circle. Tucked in the corner is the women in aviation exhibit along with the WASP exhibit. There are so many other items to see in this room as you look up and all around.

The Dehmel Room has model airplanes from commercial and military aviation. There's also the world's first electronic flight simulator which was built by Curtis-Wright right here in NJ. It's so much different from the ones I trained in at the airlines.

Heading up the elevator or stairs (there are photos in the stairway) to the second floor brings more goodies. You can look down on the Great Room from the balcony, the kids

can sit in the cockpit of the “Little Cut Up” and operate the controls, there’s an ejection seat, an early Radar console, working airport beacon (in case we don’t remember what one looks like with N12’s being out so long}. The back room showcases a diorama of KEWR. There is also a research library for anyone who may be doing research on aviation history.

Out the back door there are WW I trucks, a fire truck, a restored Korean War Com Shack and several aircraft. (These planes and trucks are opened for visitors during the open cockpit days or for special group tours.) The planes in the yard are the very last Martin 202A airliner from the 1950s. A bell Cobra attack helicopter that flew combat in Vietnam. My favorite is the Bell 47 MASH helicopter, the newest aircraft to move in is a SGS-2=33 glider. Off to one side is a Grumman OV-1A Mohawk. Also the cockpit of a Convair 880 which was owned by TWA and believed to have been flown by Howard Hughes. This is where I spend my time during those open cockpit events. The kids love to see all the lights lit on the panels and playing pilot and flight engineer.

Flying into Teterboro is probably not the idea between landing and parking fees. Unfortunately, AHOF does not have an aircraft parking area the closest is Signature East and, of course, they charge even our little Cessnas to park next to all those corporate jets. But, the drive up the parkway and turnpike is well worth the trip. Their website www.njahof.org shows days and times they’re open and the dates of their open cockpit events.



New Jersey Space Grant Consortium Supporting Aviation and Aerospace Workforce Development in New Jersey

By: Michelle Stella Riordan

The New Jersey Space Grant Consortium (NJSGC) serves as NASA's educational arm in New Jersey for higher education, advancing the mission and goals of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program. Managed by NASA's Office of STEM Engagement, the National Space Grant network includes 52 consortia representing all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Together, these consortia help develop the highly skilled, technically literate workforce needed to support NASA, the aerospace industry, and the nation's growing STEM economy.

NJSGC is primarily a collegiate program with some support for K-12. Our program leverages NASA funding to create impactful fellowship, internship, research, higher education, and outreach opportunities that strengthen STEM education and expand pathways into aviation, aerospace, engineering, and advanced technology careers. Through these programs, NJSGC supports workforce development by preparing students with the technical knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and hands-on experience needed in aviation maintenance, engineering, robotics, remote sensing, aviation technology, and emerging aerospace fields. This directly aligns with NASA's workforce goals for building a diverse, capable pipeline of future scientists, engineers, technicians, educators, and innovators.

As an umbrella organization representing 22 affiliate colleges, universities, and institutions across New Jersey, NJSGC coordinates and advances space science, aerospace, aviation, and high-technology educational and research initiatives statewide. The consortium fosters collaboration among academia, industry, government agencies, and community partners to create strong educational and research networks that support innovation, workforce readiness, and economic growth.

NJSGC students engage directly with university researchers, NASA professionals, engineers, and aerospace industry experts through hands-on projects, internships, research experiences, and STEM outreach activities. These experiences provide students with real-world applications in aviation, space technology, engineering, robotics, and scientific research while helping cultivate the next generation workforce essential to NASA's future missions and New Jersey's aviation and aerospace industries.

The goals of NJSGC closely align with those of the New Jersey Aviation Education Council through a shared commitment to aviation and aerospace education, workforce development, career awareness, and student engagement. Both organizations recognize

the importance of creating opportunities that inspire students to pursue careers in aviation, aerospace, engineering, and other high-demand STEM fields while strengthening New Jersey's future workforce pipeline. Preparing students for success in aviation, aerospace, and other high-demand STEM careers will help shape the future of New Jersey and the nation.

Recent Highlights:

The New Jersey Space Grant Consortium Annual Affiliate Meeting & Student Research Poster Session highlighted the incredible depth and diversity of student research taking place across New Jersey. Topics ranged from astronomical data pipeline cybersecurity and electrospray deposition to fluid transport and other aerospace-related research areas, showcasing the innovation and technical talent being developed at universities throughout the state.

The event provided an important opportunity for faculty, researchers, industry professionals, and students to exchange ideas, build connections, and explore future collaborations. It also gave students the chance to present their work directly to peers and professionals while gaining valuable experience communicating complex research and technical concepts.

NJSGC recently partnered with the Aviation Institute of Maintenance (AIM), an aviation mechanic training school in North Jersey, by sending three of their graduates to intern in an aviation maintenance company and an aerospace components manufacturer. NJSGC provided the stipends for the students for 200 hours of internship per student. The students, the employers, and AIM leadership were all happy with the activity. NJSGC will be conducting such training activities in the future.

In summary, supported through funding from NASA, NJSGC continues to strengthen hands-on research opportunities, advance aerospace and STEM innovation, and help prepare the next generation workforce of scientists, engineers, and technology professionals. We look forward to increasing our collaboration with the New Jersey Aviation Education Council.

The picture on the next page shows the participants in the New Jersey Space Grant Consortium Academic Year Internship Poster Session. About 60 students across the state representing all educational institutions in New Jersey with STEM programs participated.



Upcoming Events

Additional information can be found at the link below each event.

South Jersey STEM Ecosystem - Virtual STEM Chat - June 10th from 12-1pm

[Virtual STEM Chat Registration Form](#)

Young Eagles Free Flights for Children ages 8-17 at Ocean County Airport - June 20th

[Young Eagles Flight Registration](#)

Airfest 2026 at Naval Aviation Station Wildwood Aviation Museum - Sept. 3rd - 6th

[Airfest 2026](#)

Take Flight at ACY - September 26, 2026

[Aviation Influence.org](#)

Rowan University at Burlington County to host NASA Astrophysicist - Oct. 14th

[NASA Astrophysicist Presentation](#)

Aviation Seminar - Feb. 2027

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[New Jersey Aviation Education Council](#)

Aviation Students' Hall of Fame

Roxbury High School

Tyler Benedetto: Class of 2024: PPL, Instrument, Commercial

Mat Milun: Class of 2024: PPL, Instrument, Commercial

Connor Stark: Class of 2024: PPL, Instrument

Luke Scaraggi: Class of 2023: PPL, Instrument, Commercial, Multi-Engine

Tony Gonzalez: Class of 2020: PPL, Instrument, Commercial, Multi-Engine

Nick Terrero: Class of 2023: PPL, Instrument, Commercial, Multi-Engine, CFI, CFI-I,
MEI

Dalton Dougherty: Class of 2027: Solo

Michael Johnson: Class of 2027: Solo

Aaron Pineiro: Class of 2026: Solo

Dom Bartlett: Class of 2023: Solo

Yuriy Hrytsay: Class of 2025: earned his PPL

Raritan High School

Sean Trank: Class of 2024: Mercer County College Aviation Program

Thomas Trank: Class of 2024: Mercer County College Aviation Program

Elvis Pupovic: Class of 2025: ATP Aviation Program

Brianna Paris: Class of 2025: Embry Riddle

James Doriety: Class of 2022: Graduated from Mercer County College Aviation
Program

Resources

New Jersey Aviation Education Council



<https://aviationec.org/>

Experimental Aircraft Association

<https://www.eaa.org/ea>

Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association

<https://youcanfly.aopa.org/>

Civil Air Patrol

<https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/>