

MEDIA RELEASE

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Technology students build working aeroplane

Nine senior students are building a fully-functioning, two-seater aeroplane as part of an innovative school project.

The Year 11-13 Technology students, from Mercury Bay Area School, in Whitianga, took up the challenge after retired aviation engineer, Jim Evans, approached the senior school with the idea at the end of last year.

Under Jim's mentorship, and with support from volunteers from the community, the eight boys and one girl began building the plane in February and are expected to be finished sometime next year. Once completed, the aircraft will be used as a training plane.

Spending five hours a week on the project – three of them in their own time – the students have so far built the rear section of the plane and are now working on the wings and the centre fuselage.

Aviation teacher Karlos Bosson said: "We had a retired aviation engineer approach the school with a proposal. He would supply a kitset aircraft and the school would provide students to help build the aircraft. It was basically giving kids experience in a workplace setting in aviation and obviously they are also picking up qualifications from ATTTO (The Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation) while completing the build.

"The owner of the aeroplane leased a building near to the airfield at Whitianga and he has set up a small workshop, which he funded, alongside community help. The school donated tools and contacted some of our suppliers to donate extra tooling. It is a partnership between the school, the owner of the aeroplane and any members of the community who are available to volunteer their time or their services."

The mentors - who include ex-air New Zealand engineer Seth Bird, Brian Yelland who worked for Channel 7 in the engineering department, flight instructor Charles Russell, engineering volunteers Tony Turner, Peter Austin and Luc Hos and other community volunteers - help the students read the construction manual, make sure they understand what they are doing and explain and teach techniques.

Earlier this year the group travelled to Auckland for a two-day trip to visit the Air New Zealand Aviation Training Institute, and were privileged to view the maintenance of different planes in the hangars. They also visited to Mulcahy Engineering, took part in aviation workshops and experienced a flight simulator at Ardmore Airport. A highlight of the trip was visiting New Zealand Warbirds Association and Avspecs to see a Mosquito and Spitfire being restored.



Mr Bosson added: “The students are very keen and the response from them has been amazing. The response from the community has just escalated and I have got people actually approaching me about the project. We are looking at a partnership with the local aero club to give the students involved a one-year membership and the possibility of them setting up a scholarship for one student to learn to fly. “

Updates on the plane build can be viewed at www.mbas.ac.nz/index.php/senyears/rv12

For more information on Technology education visit www.techlink.org.nz

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About Techlink

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