ACE Lifts Off in 2011-2012!

With approximately 17,850 students and 690 educators at 92 schools across 27 states, participation in CAP’s K-6 Aerospace Connection in Education (ACE) Program has grown approximately 68% in student participation from last year. CAP is honored to have continued local and national support for the ACE Program from a variety of companies and organizations such as the Air Force Association (AFA); FLIR Systems, Inc.; Sertifi; and the Prattville Rotary Club. Additionally, CAP was honored to receive a $10,000 grant from Lightspeed Aviation Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of these companies and organizations, more students were able to experience the ACE Program.

Many ACE schools organized a special event to “lift off” the start of the ACE Program. Anthem School, the 2010-2011 ACE School of the Year from Anthem, AZ, kicked off their second year in the ACE Program with another exciting aerospace school challenge. Mr. Yennie, the school’s principal, challenged students to a parachute drop. The challenge had specific rules and allowed students to research parachute designs. Tracy Huemoeller, third-grade teacher and Anthem’s ACE coordinator, explained, “Class winners were determined by hang time. One teacher dropped the chutes from the same height while a second teacher timed the drop using a stop watch (or iPhone timer in our case). We then had the same teacher drop each class winner to get each grade-level winner.” The local fire department assisted with the final rounds of the parachute drop competition by allowing Mr. Yennie and his assistant principal to rise about 100 feet (33.3 yards) above the ground in their bucket truck to drop the student-made parachutes. Huemoeller continued, “Building winners came from the 100-foot bucket truck, and then we took each of those back up for the overall winner. Again, we used hang time. Winning parachute hang time was 16.78 seconds. The fire truck was a huge hit and made this so much fun.”

At Antioch Elementary School in Crestview, FL, students were met with the surprise of their local Gulf Flight 1 medical helicopter landing on their sports field. Laura Pink, Antioch’s ACE coordinator, explained that it took a lot of people to coordinate the effort and to keep it a secret from the students. A local reporter wrote, “After several tantalizing passes over the school, generating frenzied cheers and waves from faculty and students alike, the arrival of the helicopter officially launched the school’s ACE program.”

Kemmerer Elementary School in Diamondville, Wyoming, also launched its ACE Program with fun activities. Students participated in an activity to learn about helicopters, engaged in a paper airplane competition to learn about flight, and watched a presentation about the history of flight. Two CAP senior members, Maj Dorothy Christianson and Capt Edward Felleson, were on hand to assist with the liftoff event. In a follow-up ACE liftoff event, a Chinook helicopter performed a fly over at the school, circling the school three times, which continued the ACE program excitement.
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In a partnership initiative, the AFA joined CAP to support a National ACE liftoff at Ridgewood Park School in Orlando, FL. The over 800 students, faculty, and guests were honored to have as the Grand Marshal and speaker retired, retired U.S. Air Force Col Joseph Kittinger, who holds the record in scientific human endurance experimentation for having the highest, fastest, and longest skydive from a parachute at more than 102,000 feet. (He also was the first man to make a solo crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in a gas balloon.)

Fitting for the occasion, balloonist Kip Pringle inflated his yellow happy-faced hot air balloon as a backdrop in a field adjacent to the school.

Barbara Walters-Phillips, an Orange County Science Specialist, CAP and Central Florida AFA chapter member, and a recent recipient of the AFA’s National Medal of Merit, coordinated Ridgewood Park’s ACE liftoff event with CAP, the AFA, Assistant Principal Vanessa Morrow, and the community. Principal Jerome Thompson stated, “We are proud to be able to provide our students with quality enrichment opportunities that will involve community support from CAP, the AFA, and business and industry in our area. These positive role models will help our students realize the benefits of a good education and hard work for their futures.”

The 2011-2012 ACE Program is off to a fantastic start! To read more about these liftoff events and others, click “ACE in the News” at www.capmembers.com/aceteachers. If not familiar with the ACE Program, click “ACE” at www.capmembers.com/ae to learn more about this grade-specific, cross-curricular, aerospace-themed elementary program that promotes science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies, as well as good character and physical fitness.