

*National Spotlight on Hillsboro Charter Academy October 26, 2018, as the National Aerospace Connections in Education 'Lift-off Site'*



Aerial surprises proliferated for the event; a recognition of the Hillsboro public charter school's winning of the Civil Air Patrol 2018-2019 National Aerospace Connections in Education Award.

Just steps from a historical marker commemorating the 1831 birth of the aviation pioneer Wright brothers' mother, Susan Koerner Wright, Hillsboro is grooming a new generation of aerospace groundbreakers at the public Hillsboro Charter Academy. On Friday, October 26, the STEAM/Project Based Learning school was recognized for its innovative curriculum and approach to learning that earned it the Civil Air Patrol's 2018 Aerospace Connections in Education School of the Year Award.

In the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) award announcement in June, Hillsboro Charter Academy's STEAM Coordinator, Megan Tucker, was lauded for her work to "integrate ACE lessons along with the other CAP/STEM programs." Hillsboro Charter Academy Principal Mark Wertheimer said, "The passion for Aeronautics and the CAP programs is pervasive among our staff, parents, and students. We were thrilled to be recognized—from among all schools nationwide—as this year's top CAP ACE school."

In the past decade, more than 1,000 schools in 46 states have participated in the Aerospace Connections in Education (ACE) Program, reaching nearly 170,000 students. Since its inception in 2016, Hillsboro Charter Academy has been in the ACE program and has integrated aerospace education into the K-5 school's overall STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math)/Project-Based Learning approach, and has had frequent school visits by CAP and Air Force Association members.

“This award validates all of the dedication and hard work that has taken place since our public charter opened its doors in 2016,” Tucker said. “The staff and scholars have been exploring, engaging and engineering, not just in aerospace, but in all facets of their day-to-day learning. I learned early in my teaching career that if scholars are motivated, they will strive to master any curriculum. The CAP ACE program is rooted in academics through the lens of aerospace—and aviation is the perfect spark to ignite a passion for STEAM.”

The HCA “mini air show” included many “high-flying” aerospace acts, which presented many exciting surprises to the scholars. There were multiple flyovers, including a CAP plane with our principal in the air talking to us on the ground, drones (professional and student-flown), mascots (National CAP Mascot: Cappy the Eagle, and HCA’s mascot: Percy the Owl) arriving by helicopter landing, and a flyover by two other single-engine airplanes in a CAP TOP flight.



At the conclusion of the air show, scholars experienced the partial inflation of a hot air balloon to signify the “LiftOff”. The scholars also presented a have a surprise of their own for the speakers and spectators at the event, involving aerospace themed songs/dance and a rollout of class mission patches.

The National Civil Air Patrol Headquarters, based in Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, sent two Special Guests for our ceremony: Susan Mallett who is Educational Outreach for CAP HQ and Sue Mercer; both are members of the ACE team from National HQ. CAP’s Leesburg Composite Squadron provided the CAP Color Guard.

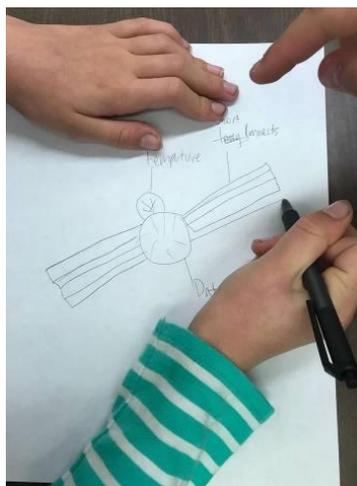


There was also a special guest keynote speaker at the school's morning event, Colonel Mark Hyatt, who spoke on character and integrity. Among many other accomplishments, Col Hyatt was a former fighter pilot, advisor to the Secretary of Defense, Vice Commandant and Director for Character Development at the US Air Force Academy, President (and Mr. Wertheimer's boss) at The Classical Academy, the largest charter school system in Colorado with over 3500 students, the Executive Director of the State of Colorado's Charter School Institute, the President and CEO of the Character Education Partnership, and the President and COO of Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum. He is currently President of Crosscloud Consulting, founder of the Wings Aerospace Academy charter school program.



Many dignitaries attended the event, including state and local government officials and LCPS administration and Board. [\[any more specific info here?\]](#)

After the Air Show, scholars rotated through aerospace presentations that focused on the CAP STEM Kits. Each scholar visited 6 different stations based on aerospace activities, specifically the STEM kits that CAP offers. Examples of rotations included Spheros, Beebots, Weather (green screen), K'Nex Aero Design Challenge, Flight Simulators (Full Size and RC), iFLY Loudoun Virtual Reality, and the opportunity to experience a hot air balloon up close and personal.



Recognized as leaders in education innovation within the Loudoun County Public Schools, the Hillsboro Charter Academy faculty facilitated a Civil Air Patrol CAP ACE/STEM Kits session at last spring's full-day professional development workshop for Loudoun County Public School teachers. "We are hopeful we can encourage more LCPS teachers to become inspired to participate the ACE program in the future," said Tucker.

Two Hillsboro Charter Academy teachers have won awards through Civil Air Patrol. Tiffany Miller was the Civil Air Patrol Middle East Region Aerospace Education Teacher of the Year in 2017 and Tucker was named the National Civil Air Patrol Aerospace Education Teacher of the Year in 2011.

