

United States 2008 Aviation Education Report

2007 proved to be a challenging year for aviation and space education programs in the United States. There is a definite decline in support for aviation and space education, due in large part to a decline in the U.S. economy and decline of support from U.S. Federal aviation and space agencies. For the first time in nearly 20 years the United States did not participate in the International Aviation Art Contest. Financial challenges prevented the U.S. sponsors, the National Aviation Association (NAA) and the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) from funding the program.

Several Federal agencies, the FAA, NASA, and the U.S. Department of Education, have reduced funding for aviation and space education outreach programs. However, a former ERAU professor is working in coordination with the U.S. Office of Education to implement a middle school program based upon aerospace education concepts. The program is working with over twenty eight schools and the number is growing.

The decline of national leadership is causing a shift to the states and private organizations to provide aviation and space education. There are some positive happenings and progressive ideas being generated by these entities. One such change is at the EAA Fly-In at Oshkosh. This year they are dropping their program for teachers and replacing it with "informal" education programs.

Another comes from David Roy, Manager - Training Support Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) Prescott Arizona Campus. Mr. Roy has proposed an FAI "in-house" program to select the "best" paintings from the past 20 year's Gold Medal winners in the 3 categories of the Young Artists Contest. Those selected could eventually become a significant traveling exhibition. ERAU has the capability to support a special web-based survey instrument that may be used for this purpose.

Also, the National Coalition for Aviation & Space Education (NCAE) is taking on a more prominent role in aviation and space education activities. Representing over 40 associations and organizations the NCAE is providing leadership and coordination in the promotion and the expansion of aviation and space education. In 2007 a new organization "Global Space Travelers" joined NCAE. It is focusing upon the future of space travel for middle school students. They have published a new textbook and a teacher's guide.

In September 2007, the NCAE successfully sponsored the second Bi-Annual "National Leadership Conference. There were approximately 80 attendees. The program was highlighted by presentations from the FAA, the U. S. Office of Education, and the National Association of Executives. NCAE is also planning for the 2008 Conference, Oct 16-18 in Washington, D.C. The theme is: Today's Students: Tomorrow's Aerospace Workforce. They hope to increase attendance by marketing to leaders of "informal" education activities.