



# St. Louis Downtown Airport Serves As Classroom For Aviation Day For Illinois Educators

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**ST. LOUIS** - The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) joined forces with Saint Louis University's Oliver L. Parks Department of Aviation to host Aviation Day for Educators on June 16, bringing educators from six school districts in Southwestern Illinois and Eastern Illinois University to St. Louis Downtown Airport. With a focus on showing math and science teachers creative ways to incorporate aviation topics into the general STEM curriculum, school was still in session for several Illinois educators as they experienced the aviation industry firsthand and learned about various aviation education resources.

ISMA Director Angi Rowley kicked things off by explaining the overall goal of the event as relates to math and science education. "It is to integrate both of those fields into things that are hands on, that are cool, that are fun, that take a whole lot of skill involved," Rowley said. IMSA hosts professional development opportunities statewide that provide educators opportunities to learn new ways to teach STEM concepts in the classroom.

Kelly Remijan, Professional Development and Curriculum Specialist at IMSA's office in Belleville, Illinois, played a key role in organizing the event and gave an "Aviation Integration" presentation highlighting dozens of fun and creative ways to link specific

mathematics and science concepts to aviation topics and, subsequently to different careers in the aviation field. Leveraging the four forces of flight – lift, thrust, drag and weight – she showcased different experiments and projects that could easily be deployed in the classroom setting. She also directed participants to a variety of resources to access everything from free software that can instantly create charts for teachers and students, to free flight simulators.

“Math and science are always so separate; if we can bring it together, it’s powerful,” Remijan said. “Take away some experience, something to take back to your students and to inspire students of all levels, because every student has the ability to be involved in some aspect of the aviation field. They don’t have to be pilots; there's lots of jobs available connected to aviation.”

Among the hands-on activities available during the morning portion of the event, educators had the opportunity to experience a flight with pilots from Ideal Aviation, a long-time tenant at the airport. Margaret “Meg” Schnoeker from Chester School District 139 was a little anxious before taking to the skies, but ended up thrilled she took advantage of the opportunity.

“Flying was so much more than I could have imagined, and I shouldn’t have been nervous at all. I can’t wait to go again some time,” she said.

Additionally, while on the ground, educators had the opportunity to tour several different aviation related vehicles, including a Piper Archer, survival flight helicopter, the airport fire truck, and a Cessna Skyhawk. A Charles Lindbergh exhibit was brought onsite by non-profit AeroCareers, which included the New Spirit of St. Louis airplane and a full-scale reproduction of the original *Spirit of St. Louis* cockpit.

The educators also attended a mixture of presentations, activities and networking opportunities with organizations such as Southwestern Illinois College, Civil Air Patrol, AIAA, Minorities in Aviation, Scott Air Force Base, The Gateway Youth Aeronautical Foundation and the Greater St. Louis Ninety Nines. Each organization provided another perspective on the aviation industry that allowed educators to gather more information that will be applied when teaching students math and science concepts. With sessions that focused on drones and the opportunity to spend time in one of several high-tech flight simulators that are used by SLU’s aviation students, educators got to experience some of the exciting opportunities that await their students should they decide to pursue a career in an aviation related field.

“The aviation industry is so robust. In Illinois alone, it has a \$95 billion economic impact,” said Sandra Shore, Director of St. Louis Downtown Airport. “As an industry we have realized that we need to spark students’ interest at an early age, because if you

don't have some sort of connection to the industry, a lot of times you never even think about it.”

For Schnoeker and the other participants, the lessons learned over the course of the day are ones they are eager to take back to their classrooms to spark that interest.

“As a 4th grade teacher, I hope to incorporate as much as I can into our math and science curriculums with measurement and force,” Schnoeker said. “I also want to encourage students to read about aviation and begin to interest them in fields they probably wouldn’t have known about. I learned a great deal from the experience and had a great time.”

Aviation Day for Educators was promoted across the region and was open to any educator who pre-registered. Participants came from the Greenville, Gillespie, Red Bud, Madison and Chester School Districts, and from Eastern Illinois University’s Grow Your Own Program.

St. Louis Downtown Airport is located just east of downtown St. Louis on more than one thousand acres in the Illinois municipalities of Cahokia Heights and Sauget.

## **About Bi-State Development**

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