

World's First Flying Classroom

The Flying Classroom, the first-ever interactive STEM+ learning adventure spanning 3 continents, led by National Geographic Emerging Explorer Captain Barrington Irving, was launched on Tuesday, September 23rd from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Captain Irving, who holds the Guinness World Record as the youngest person to fly solo around the world, will pilot Inspiration III, a business jet provided by Executive Air Services in Miami. Irving and his crew will visit North America, Asia, Indonesia, and Australia, exploring real life applications of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, history, geography and humanities (STEM+) through 16 powerful ground, air, and sea expeditions. An electronic portal originating on board the plane will enable students to follow and participate in Irving's expeditions in schools and at home on their computers and mobile devices. "This isn't just an aircraft," said Captain Irving. "It's an exploration vehicle for learning that will engage and teach millions of kids in ways they've never been taught before—making them part of the expeditions and research. I hope this experience will help students discover their passion for STEM+ the way my own mentor, Captain Gary Robinson, a professional airline pilot, helped me discover mine when I was 15." Fabio Alexander, CEO of Executive Air Services added, "My goal was to provide a transportation tool, Inspiration III (a Hawker 400XP) for this ground-breaking STEM+ initiative with American educational hero Captain Irving at the helm, to engage students to find their interest and a career path they love as they experience exciting, virtual adventures around the world." Inspiration III will travel to all seven continents over three consecutive school years. Throughout each flight, students will have virtual access to Irving's adventures through videos and a real-time storytelling blog on www.FlyingClassroom.com. Students in schools that utilize the Flying Classroom curriculum, which is aligned to the National Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, will also study STEM+ subjects relevant to each expedition as they track the Flying Classroom team. All visitors to the site can access Irving's travels and meetings with STEM+ experts along the way. In Montana, for example, Captain Irving will meet a chef with a bionic arm and see how the human brain can control robotic limbs through the thinking process. In Australia, he will illustrate how to balance an ecosystem by eradicating a poisonous toad. In Palau, working with another National Geographic Explorer, he will track poisonous snakes to extract lifesaving venom. A steady stream of challenges during each journey will invite students to solve problems that may lead them to discover a career path in STEM+. The Flying Classroom is supported by title sponsors Executive Air Services, the Miami-based company that supplied the jet and support personnel, and Houston-based Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc., which is providing complete trip logistics. Lex den Herder, Vice President, Government & Industry affairs for Universal® said, "It was our pleasure to support Barrington's record-setting flight in 2007, and we are now proud to support him once again as he promotes education via the Flying Classroom around the world." Other sponsors include Mitsubishi Heavy Industries; Jeppesen; FlightSafety International; British Petroleum; Michael Broyard; The Gans Family; and Doug and Kaisa Levine. Educational partners include Skype in the Classroom, the National Education Association, NASA, National Geographic, and United Teachers of Dade. The Flying Classroom Launch at Signature Flight Support Hangar, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, will include a career fair for 650 local students from 9:30-11:00 am; a program from 11:00 am —noon featuring remarks by NASA Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr., Congressman Sam Graves, title sponsors, Captain Irving, and the departure of the Flying Classroom jet at 1:00 pm. The event is being hosted by the Aero Club Foundation of Washington, Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority, and Signature Flight Support.