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Ashlee Coffey/WORLD-HERALD NEWS SERVICE

Because of his high score during a flight simulation at Abraham Lincoln High, AJ Stanley was one of five students who got to sit up front next to the pilot Wednesday.

Aerospace lessons come to life for Bluffs students

By Ashlee Coffey
WORLD-HERALD NEWS SERVICE

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COUNCIL BLUFFS — Fourteen Bluffs aerospace engineering students took to the skies Wednesday, some of them for the first time.

The students, juniors and seniors from Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson high schools, met at the Council Bluffs Municipal Airport to experience first hand what they are learning in their aerospace engineering class.

The class is part of the school's Project Lead the Way program, which provides rigorous and innovative Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education

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curricular programs used in middle and high schools across the United States.

Ryan Higgins, a teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School, said the students have learned about flight controls and flight surfaces on an airplane. They were also required to complete tutorials on a flight simulator.

Flight instructors from Advanced Air took three students per "discovery flight" to bring the simulation to life.

AJ Stanley, a junior at Abraham Lincoln, said he enjoyed flying in a small plane.

"It gets you a lot more connected with what you're doing," Stanley said. "We've been working all this time to fly in an airplane, and now we've flown in an airplane."

He said what he enjoyed most was seeing how everything worked.

"I liked watching the instruments and seeing how everything reacted in the plane like it does in the simulator," he said.

Austin Russell, a senior at Abraham Lincoln, said he was nervous before his flight.

"I've never been on a plane before," he said.

But once it was over, he wanted to go back up.

"The coolest part was watching the birds fly underneath us," he said.

The experience influenced Russell even more to continue his path toward engineering when he attends Iowa State University in Ames next year.

The aerospace engineering course, which is in its first year, came to the school through Higgins, who received special training from Project Lead the Way.

Higgins said the partnership between the school and the Council Bluffs airport has been helpful.

"They're wonderful, very generous people here," he said. "The students are given a discounted rate of \$10 instead of the \$68" for their flight time.

Higgins said freshman students taking intro classes are excited to work their way up to flying in a plane — and he's hoping that will help interest more students in the program.

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