

NASA News



National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

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Nov. 12, 2009

RELEASE: CLT-09-183

NASA TEAMS WITH MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOLS TO CREATE SPACE HARDWARE

BAY ST. LOUIS, Miss. – NASA’s John C. Stennis Space Center announced plans Nov. 9 to team with students at four Mississippi high schools to develop prototype hardware for the next-generation rockets being built to carry humans beyond low-Earth orbit.

During the next few months, students at East Central High School in Hurley, Gulfport High School, New Albany School of Career and Technical Education and Petal High School will participate in the High Schools United with NASA to Create Hardware (HUNCH) initiative.

Their assignment is to partner with NASA engineers and mentors and use materials provided by the space agency to develop prototype models for the next generation J-2X engine and the Ares I rocket. Both are being built as part of NASA’s Constellation Program plan to transport astronauts to the International Space Station after the space shuttle is retired and to explore destinations beyond low-Earth orbit.

“This is not just a simulation of work experiences – it is an actual work-world experience, as students collaborate with peers and NASA engineers to develop a real product,” explained Cheryl Guilbeau, elementary and secondary projects coordinator for the Stennis Education Office.

HUNCH was launched in 2003 and expanded to include Stennis Space Center this year. The Mississippi schools participating in the initiative were notified Nov. 9 and took part in a kickoff teleconference Nov. 10. Guilbeau and a NASA engineer are visiting each school in the days ahead.

Participating student teams receive product specifications from NASA, as well as materials needed to construct a prototype model and software to create computer-assisted designs. Through March, students will create such designs, then build prototype models of their

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product based on those designs. NASA engineers will use those models for hands-on, table-top discussion and for checking their functional fit in a full-scale space vehicle mockup. The models will be unveiled at an Awards Day ceremony at Stennis Space Center on April 23.

In addition to introducing students to a real-world work experience, the goal of the HUNCH initiative is to inspire high school students to pursue careers in science, technology or engineering fields.

“HUNCH is a win-win for NASA, schools and students,” Guilbeau said. “NASA is inspiring the next generation workforce and gaining parts for the Ares mockup. Students are developing communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills to succeed in the workforce.”

HUNCH teams include faculty leads and 10-15 student team members who will work with NASA mentors. The teams also have support from local school systems, industry partners, media representatives and nonprofit organizations, Guilbeau said.

For information on HUNCH, contact Gilbeau at 228-688-2208 or via e-mail at:
cheryl.a.guilbeau@nasa.gov.

For information on education initiatives provided by the Stennis Education Office, visit:
<http://education.ssc.nasa.gov/>

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