

HORIZONS

Views and Perspectives from
WEST MICHIGAN
AVIATION ACADEMY

Summer 2026

Discovery Flights Live Up to Their Name

Thanks to donor generosity through the WMAA Foundation, WMAA offers Discovery Flights to students interested in learning more about aviation. For Karl Ewing, the Discovery Flight he took as a sophomore literally changed the course of his educational career.

"I wasn't really interested in aviation when I came to WMAA," Karl shared. "But getting up in that small plane piqued my engineering brain. I could see the instruments and see how it worked. Suddenly, I realized I could be in control. In that minute, I knew I wanted to fly for a living."

His mom, Bernice, was excited to hear about Karl's new-found passion, but also a little nervous. "I kept thinking about all the things that could go wrong," she confessed. "Karl had only been driving a car for one year before he started to fly a plane! But if there's anyone I would trust with that kind of responsibility, it's Karl."

Karl reassured his mom that safety comes first. "Mr. Seback, my ground school instructor, introduced the aviation world to me. He was one of my favorite teachers because he helped me understand the importance of what I was doing. We have procedures for a reason. Lives are at stake. I also really appreciated Mr. Baker, because he explained the engineering behind how the plane works. I understood the 'why' and that made me fully confident."

Bernice respected the way Karl applied himself to his newfound passion. "Aviation became his top priority," she said. "He missed family vacations so he could study. Time with friends took a back seat. I wanted him to enjoy being a teenager, and this seemed so intense. But it was eye-opening to see how seriously he took aviation, and how



"I would like to thank the donors who made this possible. If I hadn't gone on that one Discovery Flight, I would never have known that this dream was possible for someone like me." — Karl Ewing

much responsibility he developed as a result. I had to honor his commitment."

Karl is now focused on moving his career forward. "I'm going to Western Michigan University so I can earn my commercial ratings," he said. "Then I want to become a certified flight instructor to gain hours so that I can eventually become a commercial pilot."

"The opportunities Karl received at WMAA are stunning," Bernice said. "As parents we are so grateful that he discovered his passion and had the resources to pursue it. If these opportunities had not been available, his life would be so much different."

Celebrating 15 Years of Legacy, Excellence, and Vision

This 15th year of WMAA has been a milestone year of celebration and reflection. As we wrapped up the year with our *Leaders of Tomorrow Gala*, we celebrated the three intertwined themes of legacy, excellence, and vision that are the hallmarks of our school.

The capacity crowd of Gala guests mingled with WMAA students while exploring demonstrations and exhibits highlighting some of the unique opportunities WMAA offers. They enjoyed video visits from many former keynote speakers during dinner, and then witnessed a deeply moving interview with WMAA founder Dick DeVos and his wife Betsy as they reflected on the journey thus far.



“What has happened here has exceeded my expectations. I had hoped for a couple hundred kids...we are at 600 plus. We can and must do education better and differently. I want WMAA to be an example to the nation, that specialty schools can have tremendous results.”

— Dick DeVos

“I have visited hundreds of schools. There is no other place like WMAA. My hope is that 15 years from now, we have a WMAA graduate flying Air Force One!”

— Betsy DeVos

We extend our sincere thanks to Gulfstream Aerospace, our title sponsor, and Embraer, our VIP Reception sponsor. We also thank the many other sponsors and generous donors who have given our students so much through their financial support of this event. We are truly grateful for the incredible community support extended to WMAA and our students.



THANK YOU SPONSORS

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Gulfstream Aerospace

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WEST MICHIGAN
AVIATION ACADEMY

Legacy



“The higher
your altitude,
the broader your horizon.”

Dick DeVos, WMAA Founder



Excellence



2015-2016
Robotics program
quadrupled; second
plane gifted

2011-2012
First engineering
and robotics
classes offered

2013-2014
First graduating class,
including 3 with
private pilot license

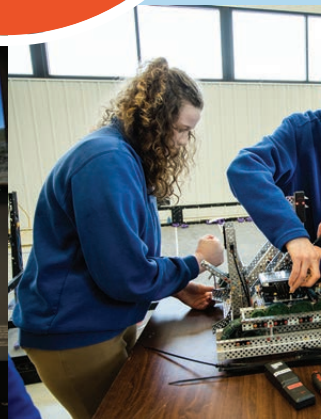
2016-2017
Reached maximum
enrollment; launched
7 robotics teams

2010-2011
WMAA opened
with 80 students

2012-2013
Acquired first
plane; introduced
aerospace
engineering

2014-2015
Added Private
Pilot Flight
Training to
curriculum

2017-2018
90% of class accepted to
higher education; added
biomechanical
engineering class



Vision



2020-2021
100th student
earned a private
pilot license

2018-2019
Formed WMAA
Foundation;
implemented
Curriculum Camp

2022-2023
Glider gifted to WMAA;
#1 charter school and
#4 among all public
schools in the state for
college readiness

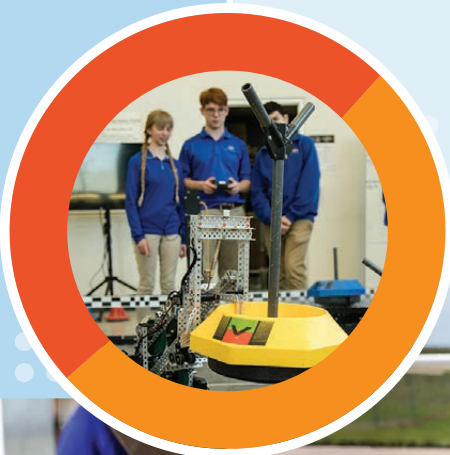
2024-2025
Freshman applications
reached 200% of capacity

2019-2020
Introduced
Build-A-Plane class
and UAS ("drone")
ground school

2021-2022
Opened Flight
Training Center;
introduced
flight training
scholarships;
third plane gifted

2023-2024
Completed first
Carbon Cub EX2;
VEX robotics
team won the
Excellence Award
and 2024 State of
Michigan VEX
Championship

2025-2026
200th student will
earn a private
pilot license;
received
"Pathways to
Opportunity"
award (National
Charter Schools
Institute)





Support Our Students Year-Round

WMAA provides an innovative high school curriculum designed for students who have a passion for aviation and/or an interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

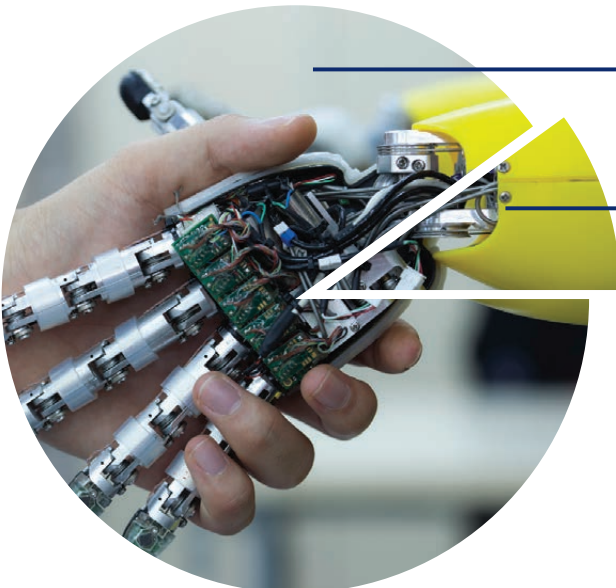
As a public charter high school, West Michigan Aviation Academy receives a per-pupil stipend from the state, which covers the traditional courses. However, the Academy provides

educational opportunities above and beyond what can be found in other high schools. Those opportunities require an investment of approximately \$1,500-\$2,000 per year, per student. That's why we need your support.

Your gift to WMAA helps sustain the programs that set this school apart and continue to attract students seeking high-impact STEM opportunities.



Scan the QR code or use the enclosed envelope to make a gift.



➔ **90%** State funding for core subjects

➔ **10%** Philanthropy to fund advanced programs

WMAA Foundation Role

- Fill the gap between state funding and actual cost
- Secure additional funds to advance our quality and mission





1 year of Redbird Simulator maintenance

300+ field trips to engineering companies

All uniform shirts for Career & Technical Education students



Two 100-hour airplane safety inspections

1 year of competition fees for robotics teams

Supplies for one year of Aerospace Engineering or Biomedical Engineering

1 year of online drone safety curriculum

1 year of online aviation maintenance curriculum



1 year of aviation maintenance supplies

3 months of fuel for one airplane

1 year of state of the art science supplies

Commercial-grade UAS equipment



Private pilot flight training instruction for 2 students

1 season of Summer Glider Camp

1 semester of fuel for student flight training

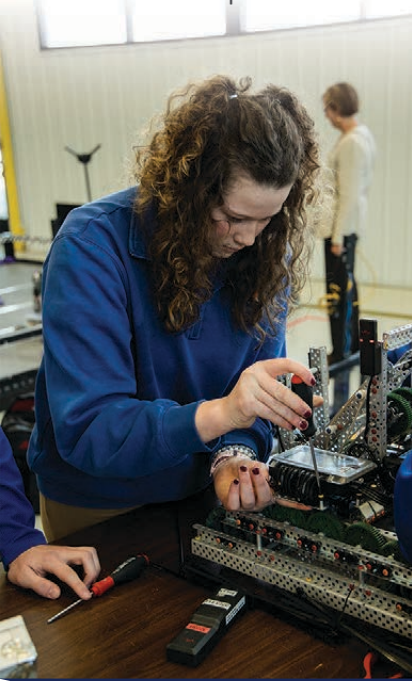


Half the cost of an airplane engine overhaul

90 bus passes for WMAA students who need them

New Student Orientation for 155 students

5363 44th St SE
Grand Rapids MI 49512



Save the Date!

October 1, 2026

Our annual *Broadening Horizons Breakfast* is a wonderful opportunity to introduce new people to the mission of WMAA and the accomplishments of our students. Please save Thursday, October 1, 2026 for this important event, and stay tuned for more information. We would love to welcome you as a sponsor or table host. Please contact Stephanie Taylor for more information about either of these opportunities.

Planning Ahead

Our Gala this year was a sold-out success, thanks to the sponsors and attendees who once again demonstrated their commitment to WMAA students and our mission.

The momentum continues, and we're already planning for next year. Please mark Thursday, May 13, 2027 on your calendar for the 16th annual *Leaders of Tomorrow Gala*. If you would like to become a new sponsor for this sold-out event, please email Meggan George to join our mailing list. Sponsorship packets will be sent in early 2027.

16th Annual
**Leaders
of
Tomorrow**
Gala



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