

AOPA

Irving launching world education flight

By Alton K. Marsh



Barrington Irving will launch a classroom in the sky in October 2013, spending five months inspiring and teaching seven million school children in grades three to 10 during a flight around the world. He will use a Hawker 400XPR jet provided by Hawker Beechcraft, and has 13 companies as sponsors.

Irving appeared before a press conference at NBAA2012 in Orlando Oct. 30 with students from the Opa Locka, Fla., area who are participating in aviation or have been inspired by it. He said he has raised \$1.3 million needed for the trip and has \$1.6 million to go. National Geographic is providing some of the educational support.

Irving will focus on science and technology during his flight, communicating with students from 45,000 feet and on the ground in learning expeditions. The students will help determine what those expeditions cover.

Irving himself was inspired and mentored by a pilot. He told an airline captain, "I don't think I

am smart enough to fly an airplane.” His mentor proved to him that he was wrong. As a flying mentor, he will call students in their classrooms and blog. He has been named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer. The goal, he said, is to develop a “curriculum with a tangible finish line” that leads students to their goals.

Students will use math and science to help him plan his flights. Hawker Beechcraft Executive Vice President of Customers Shawn Vick said, “Seeing his passion for what he was doing was intoxicating.” He was talking about their first meeting when he offered the use of the Hawker 400XPR now in development at Sierra Industries in Uvalde, Texas. Modifications include new engines, winglets, and a new glass cockpit. A first flight has occurred with certification expected in several months. The aircraft is in direct competition with the Nextant 400XT that now has 83 orders and 16 deliveries out of a world fleet of 600 airplanes.

The flight traces the outlines of the continents, with the exception of flying mainly the eastern borders of Central America and Africa.

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