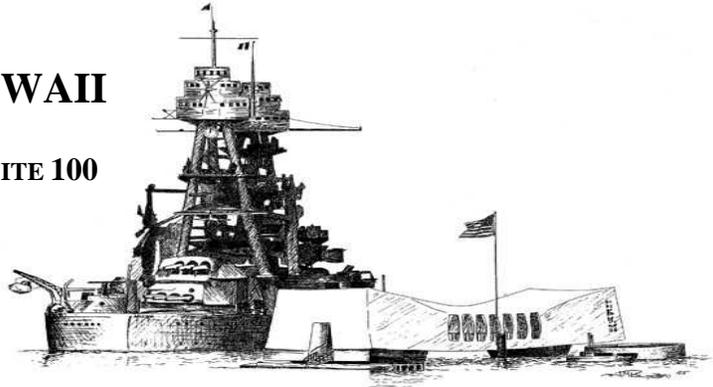


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Learning is 'Rocket Science' for Starbase Atlantis Pearl Harbor graduates

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About 30 students from the 5th grade of Pearl Harbor Kai Elementary celebrated their graduation from the Starbase Atlantis program with a rocket launching at Ford Island, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH), Feb. 8.

While Starbase Atlantis, the Navy's wing of DoD Starbase, recognized its 100,000th student at its site in Pensacola, Fla., Starbase Atlantis Pearl Harbor celebrated with their own graduation ceremony and rocket launch for its 286th class near the Pacific Aviation Museum hangar.

"It's a celebration of the fact that the Navy has been working with 5th grade students for 17 years and we've graduated 100,000 students," said Starbase Atlantis Pearl Harbor director Joseph Barrett. "We introduce them to the STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and math. We hope that we've encouraged many of them to go on and get careers in those subjects."

The Starbase program was brought to the Navy in 1994 by now-retired Vice Adm. Robert Kihune, who was then Chief of Naval Education and Training. Kihune saw the benefits of Starbase, the original name, and wanted to incorporate it into the Navy.

"To provide our students with how STEM is applied in our everyday lives requires that they be provided the opportunity to take part in hands-on programs such as Starbase Atlantis that not only stimulates their interest but that they become comfortable in a rapidly changing high-tech world," Kihune said.

Kihune now serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Kamehameha Schools.

"There is no question that programs like Starbase Atlantis contribute significantly towards regenerating the interest in our young people to pursue careers in high tech and other STEM-related areas," Kihune added.

The Pearl Harbor-based learning site contributed more than 7,000 graduates to the 100,000 total. Pearl Harbor Kai is one of two pilot schools that started when the site first opened on Ford Island in spring of 2002.

The Feb. 8 class, one of three attending from the school, included 28 students who celebrated by launching their own model rocket that they built as part of the program. Pearl Harbor Kai Principal, Dean Casupang, also attended the ceremony and congratulated the students in their achievement.

Andre Roberts, 11, was one of the students who graduated from the program and successfully launched his rocket.

"My favorite part of the program was building the rocket and doing the flight simulator," said Roberts.

Starbase Atlantis is the U.S. Navy's portion of the Department of Defense-sponsored Starbase Program, an educational program focusing primarily on 5th grade students from local communities to motivate them in science and related fields. The program helps develop positive self-esteem, teaches goal-setting skills and encourages teamwork through hands-on activities.

"It's important to show the children what their engineering and technical learning can result in," said Lt. Cmdr. Joe Lyon, the deputy director of the Naval Submarine Training Center Pacific (NSTC PAC).

NSTC PAC is the host command for the Starbase Atlantis Pearl Harbor program providing instructors and guided tours of the submarine facility to the students.

"We have some of the finest Sailors in the fleet, very technologically savvy and successful," said Lyon. "It's good to give the Sailors the opportunity to help the kids and give back to the community and for the kids to see what it's like to be an outstanding role model."

According to Barrett, the Pearl Harbor site is one of 15 Navy Starbase sites. Each site is having its own graduation event as part of the 100,000th student milestone celebration.

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