



SPREADING ITS WINGS: A new laboratory, believed to be a world first for any school, has opened at the Cape Academy of Mathematics, Science and Technology in Constantia. The lab boasts a life-size Piper Tomahawk airplane, called Tommi, which features an advanced flight simulator. PICTURES: HENK KRUGER

Students take flight in new aerospace lab

Local school opens world's first classroom dedicated to flying

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A PIPER Tomahawk airplane, which arrived at a Cape Town school in pieces on the back of a bakkie just a few months ago, is now helping pupils to understand the science of flying.

The plane, which has been nicknamed Tommi, is the centrepiece of a new science, technology, robotics, engineering, aerospace and maths (STREAM) laboratory, which opened at the Cape Academy of Mathematics, Science and Technology in Constantia yesterday.

The lab, which one speaker at the opening ceremony described as Cape Town's second international airport, will not only benefit pupils from the school but will be open to the public from July 4.

Headmaster Greg van Schalkwyk said the plane, received from the Cape Town Flying Club, had been rebuilt in a storeroom by pupils with the technical support from partners including the Sakhikamva Foundation, which is dedicated to the



PRACTICE RUN: Vikyle Naidoo, a Grade 11 student at the Cape Academy of Mathematics, Science and Technology, tries out the simulator.

development of children and youth in the aerospace industry.

The school introduced a course aimed at

helping pupils to achieve their private pilots' licences a few years ago.

"At this stage the school has two qualified

pilots in the air," Van Schalkwyk said, adding that the new project would enhance pupils' learning experience.

Tommi features an advanced flight simulator with movable control surfaces, which creates a realistic flight experience for pupils.

"The lab is all about exposing learners to technology and applying the knowledge that they get in the classroom in a simulation environment where they can work on solving problems, making plans and designs and imaging new projects for the future."

Sakhikamva Foundation founder Fatima Jakoet said young people received very little exposure to the world of aviation.

The facility, believed to be the first of its kind at any school in the world, will be a science and technology hub for young people.

It has several rooms including a space room, robotics room and an air traffic control tower replica, where pupils can, among other things, work on developing flight simulation software or focus on astronomy.

Jakoet said hundreds of pupils would be exposed to the lab during National Science Week in August.