

William “Bill” McInnish
2023 National AFA/Rolls-Royce Aerospace/STEM Teacher of the Year

9th-12th grade teacher of Aviation
Fabrication and Assembly Technician
and Private Pilot Ground School classes

[Eau Gallie High School](#), Melbourne, FL
Jeremy Salmon, Principal

[Brevard Public Schools](#)
Dr. Mark Rendell, Superintendent

**Nominated by AFA’s FL Space Coast
Chapter 309**

309 President & VP/AE, Russell Lewey
FL President, Todd Freece
FL VP/AE, Bill Yucuis



William “Bill” McInnish is a ninth – twelfth grade Aviation Fabrication and Assembly Technician teacher at Eau Gallie High School in Melbourne, FL. His success in the classroom with students involved in his high school program is phenomenal. The fact that he started the first ever such program in an economically-disadvantaged high school is tremendous in itself, but the outpouring of corporate and community support he has garnered has led to his students all receiving internships, scholarships, and jobs right out of his classroom.

Florida’s Space Coast Economic Development Commission awarded Bill the [2023 Thomas E. Gamble Excellence in Education for Economic Development Award](#) in February 2023 and stated the following:

“McInnish is known for his steadfast passion and dedication to his students. Through his vision and dedication, he led the establishment of the Aviation Fabrication and Assembly program at Eau Gallie High School which became the first in the nation to award high school students with a National Aerospace/Aircraft Assembly certification. This certificate enables students to work as entry level aircraft technicians, a key asset in building the local talent pipeline.

“A veteran of the Coast Guard where he performed Search and Rescue missions, he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to Brevard Public Schools with a cumulative 27-years of technology and CTE teaching experience. ‘As a CTE instructor, my job is easy - get students off their parent's payroll and onto



a manufacturer's payroll,' shared McInnish. 'In the eight years I have been at Eau Gallie High School, I have been fortunate to have seen many of my completing graduates go on to amazing careers at SpaceX, Blue Origin, United Launch Alliance, Piper Aircraft, L3Harris, Collins Aerospace, Embraer, and now Lockheed Martin, STS, and Boeing. Some have selected the USAF and the U.S. Marines. Many students complete Engineering degrees and move into the Aerospace Industry.'"



<p>MARCELO MALDONADO ANDREW RITTINGER IAN FIGIELLO TIMOTHY ORODYNE CHRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ ROBERTY RODRIGUEZ ROBERTY BARR SHAWN DANGLER TYLER DUGANES COLIN KING CHRISTOPHER LOPEZ RUBIN LOZADA JONATHAN ZIEGLER OWEN SWEET JORDAN SCHRECK OWEN SWEET JONATHAN ZIEGLER HARRIS ARAU-GONZALEZ</p>	<p>STEPHAN HONAKER</p>	<p>SATURDAY, CATHERINE ISAIAH SCHWARTZ ERIC KWACHIN ROBERT VELEZ KACIO BAUER ISSIC SHORTZ CHRISTIAN AYALA</p>	<p>ROBERT DORFUS MARECHO GELPI</p>
<p>CHRISTOPHER LOPEZ RUBIN LOZADA JONATHAN ZIEGLER OWEN SWEET JORDAN SCHRECK OWEN SWEET JONATHAN ZIEGLER HARRIS ARAU-GONZALEZ</p>	<p>TYLER GIBBS</p>	<p>NETO LUIS STEPHANIE DIAZ WESTON DUESTER</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ CHRISTIAN COLON</p>
<p>COLLIN MCCAIN</p>	<p>SHANE BYRD</p>	<p>STEPHAN HONAKER</p>	<p>FEELY, BYRON ANTHONY LOWERY CALEB MOINGT DUSTIN MOORE ROBERT BARENS</p>



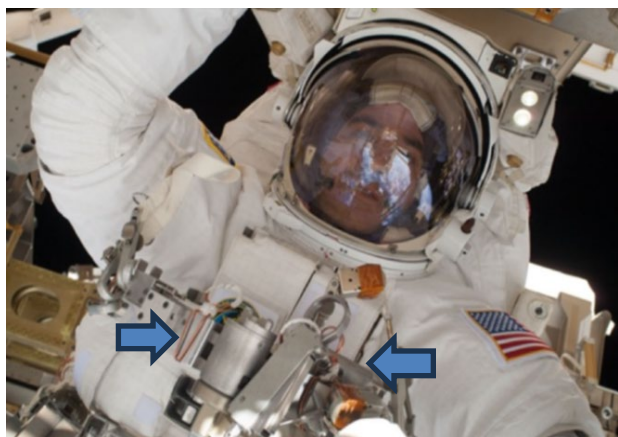
McInnish took a non-traditional pathway to becoming a classroom teacher. He had a full 22-year military career in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard with 13 career moves. He earned the Coast Guard Commandant's Commendation and the Sikorsky Flying "S" for Heroism in an H-3 helicopter award.

Bill's last job in the Coast Guard was as the Senior Instructor at the Aviation Mechanic "A" and "C" schools in Elizabeth City, NC, teaching the next generation aircraft mechanics. After retiring, he volunteered at local schools and found that he loved working with youth. So, beginning in 1994, using his Technology Education degree earned in while in the Coast Guard, he taught and ran a Technology Education Lab in Jacksonville and St. Augustine, Florida, for four years, being voted the number one Tech Ed Lab in the state of Florida. He had truly taken his love of working with youth to the next level: "teacher." And teach he has done for almost three decades!

Bill moved to Alabama in 1998 and taught Technology Education, Digital Photography, TV Production, and VEX Robotics for 17 years at Vestavia Hills Middle School. He was a member of the Technology Student Association (TSA) state council with his students competing in state, national, and international competitions, and, was an international VEX robotics judge for the summer games in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was also an adjunct instructor of computer applications at Jefferson State Community College while earning a Masters degree in Technology Education from the University of Alabama. For two years he also worked with engineers in the Teachers to NASA program at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville on the NASA Moon Nuclear Reactor project and the Ion Engine project.

In 2015, Bill's family moved back to Florida and he began teaching at Eau Gallie High School. Besides his aviation tech program, he is also the Private Pilot Ground School instructor for the students. His interactive and hands-on method of teaching has enabled his students to conduct rigorous and relevant projects which NASA is now using for their space programs. The students have worked in the NASA Hunch program, the mission of which is to empower and inspire students through a Project Based Learning program where high school students learn 21st century skills and have the opportunity to launch their careers through the participation in the design and fabrication of real-world valued products for NASA.

Bill's students have developed Extravehicular Wires (i.e. space zip ties as seen on photo below) used on space walks outside the ISS; food transport storage lockers, also used on the ISS; and 3-D designed wheels which will be on the Moon Mining Machine scheduled to launch in 2025.



The story of Bill's design and development of the first-ever high school aerospace/aviation fabrication and assembly program in the country is both interesting and inspiring. In Bill's words:

"Starting in the football team's locker room with a Conex box and a single old plane in the parking lot, we fast forward eight years where there is now a hangar full of aircraft and helicopters. Today, our graduates work in over 20 different aerospace/aviation companies. For the last four years, we have had 100% placement directly on the job, into engineering college programs, or in the military. Last summer, the head of human resources of Embraer Aircraft hired one of my student graduates. When she and her parents arrived at the office where I met them, her parents came and hugged me, saying 'You do not understand the importance and impact of our daughter getting this job at Embraer. Because of this job, for the first time ever, our family has health insurance and we can take our kids to the doctor.'"



Success: In May 2019, eight students became the first high school students in the nation to earn the National Aerospace/Aircraft Assembly certification (prior only post secondary schools) certified by ASTM International (formerly American Society for Testing and Materials), while sixteen students were awarded private pilot ground school certifications.

From Bill's perspective; his message as the National AFA TOY:

“‘Educate’ is defined as, ‘to provide schooling...’ We need to move beyond the notion of ‘providing’ to ‘empowering’ students. You need to understand, over half of the students at Eau Gallie High come from economically disadvantaged families. Their families are relying (sometimes solely) upon them to provide for their family. Therefore, my job is to get the students off their parents’ payroll and onto industry’s payroll.

“Similarly, there is a crisis in the aerospace community with a lack of qualified applicants to fill the full gamut of aerospace needs. We must increase the numbers and shorten the delay of getting qualified personnel on the job. That is very apparent here on the Space Coast, where manufacturing job growth is 2.8 times the U.S. average. Although space is at the forefront, the aircraft sector is similarly looking for technicians. This program allows students to step into high-paying jobs right out of high school, providing the aerospace industry with technicians trained, and ready, for the skills sets they need today.

“We provide students with a roadmap and a destination; requiring they need only apply themselves and stay the course. For students accepted into this program, there is a well-paying job with future opportunities available. My seniors are hired well before they graduate, and their employers have programs set-up to immediately commence further training and advancement. Our employers are committed, as they have the opportunity to mold the training and capabilities they require.

“Over the last eight years, I’ve taken this program from an idea to reality. My students and businesses are seeing results while the program continues to expand. I’ve eagerly shared our successes so others may follow, and, as AFA National Teacher of the Year, I look forward to helping others enjoy the successes we have experienced.”

Pilot Pathway

Space Coast chapter president and VP/AE, Russ Lewey:

“In addition, to the ‘hands on’ fabrication and assembly program, he also has a program enabling those interested in pursuing a pilot career, with a track towards obtaining their pilot’s license and beyond. He provides ground school training and simulator instruction, and then releases the students for flight training. With their pilot license, he has arrangements with several aviation companies, where the students are afforded additional flight experience with opportunities to obtain their Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) rating and jobs in the airline industry.”

Advocator and Facilitator

Florida State Senator Debbie Mayfield:

“Mr. McInnish's proactive approach in advocating for his students' needs is evident by his successful Local Funding Initiative Request# 1285 for Eau Gallie HS. The purchase of a used Piper Arrow III PA28r-180 for Aerospace/Aircraft reassembly/disassembly will significantly enhanced the learning opportunities for his students, allowing them to gain hands-on experience and skills that are invaluable in the aviation industry. His dedication to fostering a conducive learning environment is also evident in his pursuit of bringing an Aviation Hangar to the program. By providing his students with state-of-the-art facilities and resources, he has created a space where their potential can flourish.

“Mr. McInnish's impact extends far beyond the classroom walls. By producing some of the best young minds in Florida's Aerospace and Aviation industries, he actively contributes to the state's economy. His dedication to shaping the future leaders of these industries is both inspiring and crucial for the continued growth and success of the sector.”

Impact of Program

Florida State AFA President, Todd Freece:

“Bill’s initiatives have garnered the attention of Florida’s elected leaders, NASA, the local aerospace industry and his fellow educators across the nation. Please take time to watch some of the compilation video linked [HERE](#) for a deeper understanding of the appreciation and impact of his programs. After reviewing the video and multiple endorsements, I am certain you will see why William McInnish has my strongest endorsement as the 2023 AFA Teacher of the Year.”

Brevard County School Board Member, Matt Susin:

“It is my pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation for Mr. Bill McInnish for the Air & Space Forces Association National Teacher of the Year. As a School Board member for Brevard Public Schools, I have had the opportunity to witness his remarkable achievements. The dedication he provides his students and this community is nothing less than inspiring. Mr. McInnish launched the Aviation Fabrication and Assembly program at Eau Gallie High school, which became the first in the nation to award High School students with a national Aerospace/Aircraft Assembly Certification. His tenacious approach in teaching has undoubtedly led to the success of 100% placement of students in the Aerospace and Aviation fields over the last four years. As such, the impact this has on his students, his school, and the community are immeasurable.”