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Educational boost behind grand prix

By Gerald Ford, gerald.ford@age.co.nz | Saturday, October 13, 2012 6:00

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Students from Kuranui College will next week be competing in a minibike grand prix, held in the name of education.

Technology and engineering students will compete in the National New Zealand Secondary Schools Minibike Grand Prix 2012, held from Monday to Wednesday.

The event is the finale of senior students' technology and engineering project work, which saw them build their own racing machines.

More than 250 minibikes and sidecars will be involved, representing 25 schools from Auckland's Rosmini College in the north to Murchison Area School in the south.

Kuranui College engineering and technology teacher Doug Juggins said the pupils were hugely enthusiastic about the project. "How many other lessons do you get where students are asking to come in on their lunch break or after school?"

Pupils have the challenge of building the kitset bikes and adding engine suspension, steering and body kit.

The process involves learning MIG welding, lathe turning and drill press processes.

Students are supported by Competenz, the industry training organisation for the engineering industry, under its Tools4Work programme.

The initiative aligns with a new manufacturing and technology vocational pathway.

"The minibike project gives the students practical hands-on skills like welding, which can help them progress into a trade when they leave school," says Competenz trades general manager Fiona Kingsford.

Students gain unit standards towards the National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering Technology Level 2, and the credits are transferable to a Competenz-managed apprenticeship.

To help with building the bike, students can download a 3D minibike model online from tools4work.co.nz for free.

Riders compete in five classes, racing a 50cc air-cooled engine or a 39cc water-cooled engine, on standard or modified bikes, and also sidecars, with a range of weight classes.

The minibike grand prix was founded by Feilding High School in 1997 and this year's race is set to be the biggest yet.



AND THEY'RE OFF: A group of Kuranui College students are heading to Manfeild Raceway for a minibike grand prix where they will race bikes they have built themselves.

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