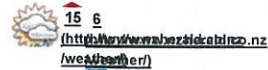


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Student-built minibikes to excel at national races

Iain Hyndman | Monday, October 15, 2012 7:30

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A group of Wanganui secondary school students are revved up to race minibikes they have built themselves at a national event at Manfield Raceway over three days this week.

The students from Wanganui High School, Collegiate and City College will join more than 25 other schools from throughout the country to compete in the National Secondary Schools Minibike Grand Prix from today until Wednesday.

The more than 250 minibikes and sidecars are all built by students as the culmination of a senior secondary students' technology and engineering project work, where students actually build the bikes they will race - a project that aligns with the new Manufacturing and Technology vocational pathway.

Entrants for the event will come from as far afield as Auckland's Rosmini College and Murchison Area School in the South Island, highlighting the project's widespread popularity.

Building the minibikes presents a substantial challenge. Students must assemble the bike kitset, adding the engine, suspension, steering and body-kit.

They must also learn MIG welding, lathe turning and drill press processes.

Engineering and technology teachers at all three Wanganui schools say that the enthusiasm of the event's entrants has been amazing, saying the students are so keen they will work on the bikes in their lunch break or after school.

The young engineers are supported throughout the process by learning resources from Competenz, the industry training organisation for the engineering industry, under its Tools4Work programme.

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

"They actually gain unit standards towards the National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering Technology Level 2. Tools4Work's association to Competenz means these credits are transferable to a Competenz-managed apprenticeship."

The minibike grand prix was founded by Feilding High School in 1997, and has since grown in popularity. This year's race is set to be the biggest yet.

"When I first started out as a teacher here there were 12 engineering students. Now I have more than 100," Roger Emmerson, head of engineering at Feilding High School and a key event organiser said.

The highest overall points winner for each class will take away the cup or shield, while the winner of the finals will receive a series of sponsored prizes. The event costs over \$12,500 and Mr Emmerson says it would be impossible to put it on without the support from Tools4Work and sponsoring businesses.

Five classes, and four rider weight categories per class will apply:



ENGINEERING SUCCESS: Wanganui High School, Wanganui Collegiate School and Wanganui City College will compete in the national Secondary Schools Minibike Grand Prix at Manfield. PHOTO/SUPPLIED