



Villa Maria student Sarah Hudson at the controls of one of Air New Zealand's Boeing 777-200 aircraft at the airline's Auckland engineering base. Inset: Sarah with Air New Zealand chief executive Rob Fyfe after she was selected for the airline's CEO for the Day programme.

Student wings it as airline CEO for a day

By CULLEN SMITH

16-year-old Sarah Hudson has learnt that top corporate executives can be relaxed and friendly while chairing meetings on beanbags.

The 16-year-old Year 12 Villa Maria student recently spent a day with Air New Zealand chief executive Rob Fyfe and his senior managers learning what it takes to be a CEO.

She joined nine other senior high school students from around the country behind the scenes at head office in Auckland as part of the national airline's CEO for the Day programme.

"I thought CEOs were really serious people, but Mr Fyfe was very relaxed,"

Sarah said.

"As a leader, he knows everyone's name and likes his employees to know he is on their level.

"It's a really good way of leadership.

"They hold meetings on beanbags." Sarah was selected from hundreds of students after entering a nationwide competition asking students to explain how they would make a difference if they were Air New Zealand's chief executive for a day.

She said she was persuaded to enter by a teacher who thought she was an ideal candidate.

"I just thought it was like another school competition.

"But I suppose you've got to be in to

win and I like doing things to the best of my ability."

Learning she'd been selected was "very exciting".

The group took part in a range of activities, including a leadership session with Mr Fyfe, a talk with the airline's chief pilot, lunch with Warriors rugby league players Lance Hohaia, Lewis Brown and Shaun Berrigan, and a social media challenge at the Air NZ design lab.

While Sarah found the airline experience "definitely worthwhile", she's not looking at a career in aviation, but is leaning toward the medical profession as either a pharmacist or nurse "or in commerce".