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Teachers Becomes Students at Air Products, Takes Business Experience Back to Classroom

Teacher Interns '08, Part One



Pictured: teachers lean about the business world at Air Products when they participated in the Lehigh Valley Business/Education Partnership's "Summer Teacher Intern Program"; from left: Erv Prutzman, a Business Education and Computer Science teacher at Northern Lehigh High School in Slatington; Michelle Brinker, an English teacher at Freedom High School, Bethlehem; and Bryce Stewart, a sixth-grade Social Studies teacher at Nitschmann Middle School in Bethlehem.

There's an old joke that says, "What are the three best things about being a teacher?" The answer? "June, July and August!" But many hard-working school teachers have chosen to spend this summer interning in a business setting thanks to the Lehigh Valley Business/Education Partnership's "Summer Teacher Intern Program."

The six-week program is designed to give teachers a better understanding of the business world (corporate and/or non-profit) and take that experience back to their students in the classroom.

Ten local organizations participated in this summer's program which provides a stipend for the teachers. Air Products was the major corporate sponsor in 2008. In return, three area teachers came to

work at Air Products in Allentown for the summer—Michelle Brinker, an English teacher at Freedom High School, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Bryce Stewart, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher at Nitschmann Middle School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and Erv Prutzman, a Business Education and Computer Science teacher at Northern Lehigh High School in Slatington, Pennsylvania.

Each educator had his/her own reason for wanting to spend the summer working. "I wanted to broaden my perspective for my students and test my own skills in business setting," said Bryce Stewart who interned with the recently merged Information & Library Services (ILS) and Business & Technology Intelligence (BTI) groups.

"When I saw Air Products on the list of companies, I always wanted to learn more about what they do there," said Erv Prutzman who also interned in ILS/BTI. "It was everything I thought it would be and so much more! I was not aware of the extensive business and scientific research they need to do." And Bryce concurs, "I never considered the amount of time and work a company like Air Products needs to invest in remaining strategically informed in market and technical developments."

Michelle wanted to keep busy during the summer months doing something that could add value for her students when she begins her new position at Council Rock High School this autumn. She worked with Air Products' Corporate Communications department, primarily in web design—a personal hobby since college—and employee communications.

"I hoped to learn more about the business world, so I can better prepare my students for the 21st Century workforce," said Michelle of her reason for choosing Air Products. "I have learned that students need to be prepared to work in a competitive, technology-driven workforce."

Who knows, maybe some of the students of these three teachers will be the next generation of business strategists, research and development experts, or marketing/sales superstars at Air Products?

Tomorrow, read CorpNEWS to see what Air Products looks like through the eyes of a teacher intern, what they learned about our business, and what they taught us.

Rachel Roland, Corporate Communications
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