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## The World is a Classroom if You're a Willing Student Teacher Interns '08 Part Two



**Pictured, from left: Erv Prutzman, a Business Education and Computer Science teacher at Northern Lehigh High School in Slatington, Pennsylvania; Michelle Brinker, an English teacher at Freedom High School, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and Bryce Stewart, a sixth grade Social Studies teacher at Nitschmann Middle School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. All three recently interned at Air Products during the summer Teacher Intern Program. And all three agreed that they gained valuable business insights to share with their students.**

This summer, three teacher interns joined the Air Products workforce for the summer to learn more about the business world, take that knowledge back to their classrooms, and offer our teams some much-needed help.

It takes a special kind of person willing to step out of his/her professional "comfort zone," even if it's only for 120 hours. Michelle Brinker, an English teacher at Freedom High School, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, found the opportunity energizing. "It is exciting to step out of the teacher role once in a while. I've learned a great deal of new things this summer and feel that I still have a lot to learn." Michelle found the fast pace of work, the multiple demands, and the willingness of employees to share and collaborate exhilarating.

The biggest challenge for Bryce Stewart, a sixth-grade Social Studies teacher at Nitschmann Middle School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was that he missed the constant student/teacher interaction and feedback. For Erv Prutzman, a Business Education and Computer Science teacher at Northern Lehigh High School in Slatington, Pennsylvania, the challenge was one that many people new to Air Products notice—our internal "language." "I was a little intimidated by all the acronyms like BTI, P-card and SAP, etc. but everyone was very helpful."

All three teachers agree on one thing. The caliber of the Air Products employees. "People here have extensive education, lots of multiple and advanced degrees," said Erv.

Bryce added, "They seem to know what they have to do and work hard at it. They're united in a common goal for Air Products' success. I come from an environment where over 50 percent of my job is just trying to motivate people to work."

Michelle had the same observations about the quality of Air Products' employees. She also noticed that, despite being a big, global company, there is a "family" feel.

"Although Air Products is extremely large company there is a shared mission and shared goals that unite all employees—including interns," she comments.

And Air Products benefited from the teachers too. "I did three training sessions in Excel for employees to show them some tips about how to use the software. It was just like what I do in the classroom," said Erv who has 35 years of service at Northern Lehigh School District.

And what will these educators tell their students about life in the corporate world?

"I tell my students that if they don't learn certain lessons about discipline and motivation from me, they will learn these lessons later in life from an employer, from a landlord or parole officer— at a much higher cost," said Bryce.

Michelle echoed that theme, and added that she can tell students, from her own experience, that in addition to time management and technological savvy, they'll need "Effective communication skills and a good cup of coffee each morning" to succeed in the business world.

Erv's comment is a bit of wisdom we can all relate to, "I always tell my students that education is your friend, not your enemy. Maybe you can't wait to get out of school but learning never ends."

Rachel Roland, Corporate Communications

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