

# Summer fellowships inspire local teachers to raise student interest in math and science



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Photo Courtesy Of Sri International

Blach Junior High School teacher Lorena Rolland works with equipment which aids in her summer work at SRI International. Her project includes trying to find a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

science and engineering.

"These are companies that really need highly skilled technical workers," said IISME Executive Director Jennifer Bruckner. "They're concerned that schools are not getting students excited enough."

Neighboring companies host IISME participants in paid fellowships so teachers can use their experience to stimulate student interest.

This year's 142-teacher lineup, stationed at 41 Silicon Valley organizations, includes two other local science teachers. Karen Davis from Los Altos High School contributed to developing a new submarine fleet – scheduled to launch in 2028 – for the U.S. Navy at Lockheed Martin; and Stacy Wilson from St. Nicholas School in Los Altos Hills worked in the financial department of Applied Materials.



When Blach Junior High

School science teacher Lorena Rolland prepares lesson plans, she strives to find new ways to engage her seventh- and eighth-graders in the subject. Rolland believes her experiences this summer working at Menlo Park-based SRI International will make that task easier.

Rolland's project, finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease under the direction of SRI International, involved testing the effectiveness of specified chemical reactions in treating the disease. SRI sponsored Rolland's fellowship through Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education (IISME), a professional development program for teachers established in 1985 to address the critical need for a skilled work force in

While Wilson and Davis had prior experience in their fellowship fields, many others have not, which is part of the problem according to Bruckner. IISME strives to recruit teachers in underprivileged areas, where these types of exposure come very rarely.

The host companies select applicants qualified to work side by side with the corporate experts, then return to teaching with expanded content knowledge to revamp curriculum and assign students projects with real-life applications.

“There’s a reason you may want to stick with something even though it’s really hard,” said Rolland. “At the end of the line, there’s a job that’s more than just a paycheck. It’s extremely satisfying to do something of value for mankind.”

Such opportunities supplement professional development from school districts, which often lack the funding to provide such large-scale experiences.

According to Egan Junior High teacher Greg Davies, the Los Altos School District’s offerings focus too much on test preparations to afford time for implementing his composting project that resulted from his 2009 IISME fellowship at Lockheed.

Davies is one of 52 Los Altos and Mountain View teachers who have participated in IISME’s program since 1993.

Even in districts where teachers have sufficient professional development opportunities, Wilson said maintaining the industry-education connection is very important.

“It’s more than a class,” said Wilson, who will use her fellowship to integrate more technology, like Excel, into the classroom. “I’ve been given an opportunity to meet with people at different levels and see materials I could not see otherwise – it’s not just a simulation.”

For more information on IISME programs, visit [www.iisme.org](http://www.iisme.org).

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