

# Teachers forfeit summer for corporate experience

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Many local teachers forfeited their summer break to bring tools and lessons gained from working in a corporate setting back to the classroom, once doors open up again later this month for the start of a new school year.

By participating in eight-week fellowships, a group of 155 teachers gained "real world" experiences at 43 companies, universities and research laboratories to meet the increasing demand for stronger, more relevant science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

Seven teachers from the Milpitas Unified School District participated in the 27th annual Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education, IISME, Summer Fellowship Program at participating companies LifeScan, SanDisk and KLA-Tencor. The program wrapped up Tuesday with an end of summer celebration hosted by participating organization Applied Materials.

Karin Laube, a sixth-grade teacher at John Sinnott Elementary School, and Vianna Koenig, a fifth-grade teacher at Alexander Rose Elementary School, were the two teachers that Milpitas-based KLA-Tencor hosted at its site for the program this year. The company has hosted seven IISME teachers since 2003.

Laube and Koenig, both of whom returned to KLA-Tencor for their second summer, have been IISME fellows for four and five years, respectively.

"It's interesting to be in the corporate world where people are working so much together," Laube said. "...It's nice to bring that back in the classroom and let (students) know what you're doing here; that we're teaching you those skills that are going to be vital for your future."

She has done many projects throughout this year's program. But Laube plans to bring data organization back into the classroom; specifically in regard to students tracking their own reading goals independently through individual Excel documents with embedded math formulas to compute the outcomes.

Koenig said she plans to teach students how to write resumes and letters of persuasion along with creating lists about their positive traits. All of these activities will be themed around the baseball poem "Casey at the Bat" by Ernest Thayer about how to be successful in the face of obstacles.

In addition, Koenig's students will have a conversation with a fifth-grade class in Washington via Skype, a software application that allows users to make voice, video calls and chats over the Internet. She said this idea evolved from Skyping with people in India for a project at KLA-Tencor.

"...It just made a really strong connection and I thought I gotta get that in my classroom," Koenig said.

Above their individual projects, Koenig and Laube agreed the experience of being fellows this summer has been invaluable in terms of strengthening their work within collaborative groups. They have done this in both the corporate environment as well as year-round as teachers in Milpitas.

Similar to the corporate environment, Laube said students like employees have their individual strengths or specialties that often differ from their peers.

So collaboration is key in trying to organize the more than 20 students in one class to "get everyone on the same page," Koenig said.

The fellowships have also provided companies and universities with skilled, cost-effective professional summer employees.

"They really helped to do some work that has been on our goals to push it forward and get it completed which we have just not had the bandwidth to do," said Cheryl Gee, IISME mentor and senior manager of North America talent acquisition for KLA-Tencor. "This really allows us to take the priorities we have and execute them."

Bob Sundstrom, director of talent acquisition for KLA-Tencor, said Laube and Koenig have been particularly productive at the company for their second year since there was less need for introductions to the work environment.

He explained they took the company's "high value priorities" of organization and efficiency to create and implement new systems that can be used for all employees.

Sundstrom said there are other positives in having the IISME fellows.

"I think as a company we feel it's really important to make a connection with our community," he said.

In doing this through IISME and other outreach programs, Sundstrom said it is their hope it becomes a "virtuous cycle" that will interest more people to pursue their field at a later date.

"Our greatest fear is the drop-off in technology majors," he said, adding there has been a shortage of interest in their industry in recent years.

Koenig agrees that bringing outsiders through local businesses for real-world experience will allow for more interest in the future.

"You see all these big buildings but they're concrete boxes to kids and to say, ÔOK, you can open these doors and this is how you can become a part of this industry that is cutting edge worldwide..." Koenig said. "Just

having that opportunity to be able to bring that back to the classroom and say, "This is why I'm teaching you math. This is why science is important."

For more information about the IISME summer fellowship, visit <http://iisme.org/AboutSummerFellowships.cfm>.

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