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Teachers Work in Summer Fellowship Program

By Cynthia Cheng

When Jason Lopez learned about the opportunity to work at a company, university, or research lab during the summer to improve his performance as a teacher during the school year, he did not hesitate to apply for the program, which is sponsored by Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education, a non-profit organization based in Santa Clara. Lopez, who currently teaches biology and physical science at Wilcox High School and



Don Callejon School, respectively, was glad to discuss the paid fellowship he received from Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education, also known as IISME. His fellowship is eight weeks long and requires a standard 40-hour work week.

"My fellowship this summer is at Stanford University's Department of Chemical Engineering. There's a school at the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital which allows students to attend school year-round at the hospital. Some students are too sick to attend school- they're awaiting transplants, they're recovering from a transplant, or they have cancer. So I'm writing the lab science curriculum for the students staying in the hospital so they can do their labs at the hospital while they're getting their treatments. The hospital allows children to go to school at the hospital." Developing an educational transfer plan is a requirement for participating in the fellowship program. Teachers must use a portion of the project they've worked on at their summer fellowship and implement it into their classroom when they return to work during the school year.

"Some of the lesson plans, the labs and activities I developed for the hospital, I will be using in my own classroom during the school year," Lopez says. "For example, there's a graphing lab that teaches students how to depict scientific data accurately, and there's also a lab about how to use the metric system accurately. We did these labs at the hospital, and they will be used in my own classroom."

Founded in 1985 by local organizations in conjunction with the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California at Berkeley, IISME empowers teachers to use their real-life work experience in their fellowships to better educate their students, thereby fostering a stronger and more competent workforce in industries specializing in science, technology, engineering, and math. "Teachers get to know how it feels like to work as a staff member in their assigned organizations," says Tisha Bacigalupi, sponsor relations manager of IISME. "This program gives teachers a glimpse of the outside world so they can take a break from student life, but it also re-energizes them and helps prepare them to get back to the classroom."

"[Participating in this fellowship] seemed like a really good opportunity to bridge the gap between research and what is taught in high school and middle school science," adds Lopez. "It's a great way to stay current on what's cutting edge. As teachers you don't always know what's done in the laboratories because of the assigned curriculum of our classes. This program is a great way to bring what is on the forefront of technology to the K-12 classroom."

Visit www.iisme.org for more information about Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education.