

helping schools excel | helping children learn

## inside BERKS business:



## education goes corporate

*An anatomy and physiology teacher at Governor Mifflin High School got an "up close" and personal view of the cancer center, blood bank, and cytology department at St. Joseph Medical Center.*

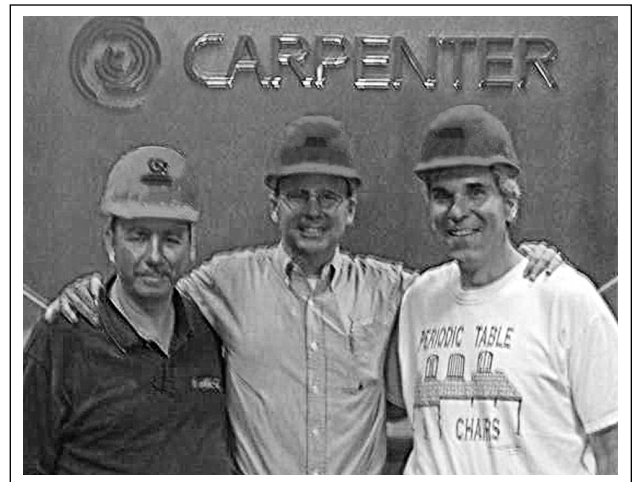
*The Reading Public Museum immersed a fifth-grade teacher from Amity Intermediate Center in the many details of planning and operating summer camps, tours, and an art show.*

*A high school Spanish teacher from Fleetwood Area School District jumped into the fast-paced, eclectic world of the entertainment industry at the Sovereign Center.*

Talk about interesting ways to spend your summer vacation! These teachers and 26 of their colleagues ventured out of their schools into corporate environments to get an insider's look at local businesses. They participated as interns in the **inside BERKS business (iBb)** program of 2009.

Educators from 13 school districts benefited from internship placements at 18 businesses throughout Berks County. They represented a diverse group from a wide range of areas, including elementary education, business, technology, math, science, English, learning support, English as a Second Language, world language, health and physical education, and school counseling. Their host businesses were an equally diverse group and offered experiences related to careers in fields such as manufacturing, the arts, finance, energy, environmental science, and medicine.

Aligned to the Pennsylvania Career Education and Work Standards, the five-day **iBb** learning experience brought members of the education and business



*Tim Hetrich (center) and Joe Kollar (right), Wyomissing Area High School teachers, benefited greatly from their iBb collaboration with Carpenter employee (and Oley Valley school board president), Robert Heckman (left).*

communities together for activities designed to give educators a rare glimpse into local businesses. As part of the program, participating businesses hosted an intern for four days. During those days, each intern learned about the company or organization and, when possible and appropriate, worked on a small business project. On the fifth day, hosts and interns gathered together for a culminating seminar.

Educators received a \$500 stipend and 40 Act 48 hours for their involvement. In turn, they were required to write an abstract describing how career awareness activities will be integrated into daily lessons. They were also required to create and present to colleagues a visual presentation describing their experiences and outcomes.

One of the most powerful outcomes for interns is an understanding of the skills students are required to have in order to be successful in the workplace. Tim Hetrich, an economics teacher at Wyomissing Area

Junior/Senior High School, described it this way: "After 26 years in public education, I was looking forward to connecting my 'ivory tower' ideology with the challenges of the 'real world.' I had a wonderful experience this summer meeting with a variety of people at Carpenter Technology Corporation."

The experience he had inside the fifth largest employer in Berks County impressed upon Hetrich the vital importance of personal accountability, technology and computer skills, proficiency in math and science, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to solve problems through collaboration.

The same lesson was learned by Lauren Piccione, a seventh-grade reading and language arts teacher in the Boyertown Area School District. "The most memorable thing I'm taking away from my experience is the value every department we visited placed on these skills for employees: literacy, the ability to work collaboratively, and the ability to think critically and solve problems," she said. "I plan to frequently integrate information I learned in my internship into my lessons and everyday conversations with my students," said Piccione.

Judy Treichler, Reading School District, and Miranda Johnson, Boyertown Area School District, also value the insights they garnered during their internships. "The strengths of the program were getting to know a local business and make valuable connections; also, to get a feel for what our students will need when they enter the workforce," said Treichler. "This program gave me the opportunity to actually talk to people in various career fields to learn what skills students need to have," explained Johnson. "For the past four years, I have been assuming what skills students will need; this was a great opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge," she said.

While educators were outspoken in their support of the program, representatives of the business community voiced their appreciation for it as well. "I believe the **iBb** program was a great experience for both our employees and the teacher intern," said Terry Gilman of First Energy Corporation. "It provided an excellent hands-on

## goals of inside BERKS business

- 1 To increase educators' knowledge of the occupations, job skills, and abilities students need to prepare for today's workforce, and to communicate such information to their students.
- 2 To improve communication between the education and the private sectors.
- 3 To enhance educational curricula through the inclusion of first-hand career information.
- 4 To encourage students to prepare appropriately for today's careers by learning communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.
- 5 To build teachers' awareness of the impact of technology in today's workplace.
- 6 To provide educators with experiences and information to support PA Career Education and Work Standards.

opportunity to bridge the gap between the business world and educational community. I feel our teacher intern came away with some definite, real-world business knowledge that she will take back to the classroom for her students," said Gilman. Explaining her company's involvement in the program, Lydia Zidik, Connors Investor Services Inc., said that "We always come away satisfied. The educators are ready to translate their experiences with us back into their classrooms. That is very rewarding to us."

**inside BERKS business** is coordinated by the Berks County Intermediate Unit and the Berks Business Education Coalition. It is managed by a committee composed of business representatives and educators. The BCIU program coordinator recruits educators and serves as a liaison between interns and mentors, while the BBEC coordinator matches mentors to educators according to their teaching assignments and interests.

For more information about **inside BERKS business**, visit [www.berksiu.org/iBb](http://www.berksiu.org/iBb) or contact Connie Skipper, Office of Professional Development and Curriculum, at [conski@berksiu.org](mailto:conski@berksiu.org) or 610-987-8496.