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Learning Journal
Merrimack Valley Workforce Involvement Board
Spring, 2010 Externship Program
Bostik, Inc., Middleton, MA

During the week of April 18 – 23, 2010, I spent time learning about Bostik's adhesive film coating process. Bostik, Inc., is one of the largest adhesive manufacturers in the world. My main contact at Bostik is Jim Boyle, technical manager, Bostik's Transportation Division. I spent time understanding the adhesive film products, the manufacturing process, and the quality control tests. I gathered process and quality data to be used in future lesson plans for my Algebra curriculum.

Prior to becoming a teacher, I was a process and environmental engineer for a large polyester film manufacturing facility. I quickly understood the manufacturing process and knew much of the language used in a plant and lab. It was exciting to be discussing technical data and manufacturing processes. I found myself wanting to be part of the problem-solving process during the discussions.

The hurdle that I had was not in the understanding of the business or the process, but rather in taking all that technical information and putting it to use for teaching high school Algebra. I was excited to be participating in technical discussions. In my initial review of the data, I had thoughts of extensive lesson plans, teaching the students engineering concepts. When I tried to put these thoughts into concrete lesson planning, I hit a roadblock. It was just too much information to present to a high school math class.

After much thought, I redirected my efforts to what I saw as the goals of the externship – to introduce business concepts to the students and expose the students to the field of engineering. I reviewed the Algebra curriculum map and state frameworks. From that, I was able to develop plans for teaching several Algebra concepts using Bostik examples. Ideally, as each of the lessons is taught during the school year, a discussion about Bostik would be used. The long-term goal is to use these examples as ways to improve the students' decision-making skills. I enjoyed this externship. It has motivated me to think of new ways to explain Algebraic concepts to my students.