

# NewburyportNews.com, Newburyport, MA

*February 23, 2011*

## Externship opens doors for Triton teacher, students

*By Michelle Pelletier Marshall*

**Correspondent**

---

BYFIELD — Paige Ribaud-Smith, an eighth-grade science teacher at Triton Regional High School, couldn't wait to get back to school last fall. Her summer experiences at a LIFT2 externship had renewed her commitment to teaching, and she was bursting to share the new knowledge with her students.

Ribaud-Smith participated in LIFT2, Leadership Initiatives for Teaching and Technology, which is a professional development opportunity available to all STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educators in the state. Through hands-on direct experience in the STEM work force, the program aims to provide educators with the opportunity to refresh their content background, renew their passion for educating, and rejuvenate their love of learning and problem solving.

For Ribaud-Smith, that meant spending six weeks of her summer vacation working full time for Weston & Sampson, an environmental engineering consulting firm in Peabody.

"During my time at Weston & Sampson, I was allowed to dip my toes into everything — from marketing to mapping projects to field work to paperwork; it was a wonderful opportunity," Ribaud-Smith said.

Ribaud-Smith noted that some of her family and friends thought she would be lured away by working in the "real world," but the opposite happened.

"This opportunity definitely satisfied my 'science craving' but also has rekindled my passion for teaching and made me realize just how much I love it," Ribaud-Smith said. "I feel refreshed in my role now and am so excited to share my experiences with my students."

Since the Triton administration was instrumental in this endeavor, having introduced Ribaud-Smith to the program, supported her with the application process and funded the small cost required for a graduate credit for this project, Ribaud-Smith recently gave a presentation about her externship to the Triton Regional School Committee.

After a lively and animated presentation, committee member Sue Densmore said, "Your enthusiasm and excitement for teaching are admirable. You make me want to go back to school!"

"This LIFT2 placement was a most amazing experience that infinitely changed the way I do things," said Ribaud-Smith. "I have always integrated my 3C's — communicate, collaborate and connect — into my lessons on a daily basis, professing to my students that these are the critical skills necessary to be successful in any area of working world. Now that I have been out there and worked in that world at Weston & Sampson, I am truly confident in using instructional time to provide my students with hands-on opportunities to apply these skill sets and enrich the content in my science classroom."

This translates into some very exciting projects for her students. Take the "picture splash," the way Ribaud-Smith has presented the latest assignment to her students. Ribaud-Smith shows the students a group of photos all pertaining to a certain topic and lets them figure out what the project is about.

"It's about teaching the students to use critical thinking to find the answer creatively and to allow them to be resourceful and engage in the power of positive collaboration," Ribaud-Smith said.

And her students appreciate her dedication.

"You can see she loves science by way she acts," said Teresa Benoit. "All of her energy goes into teaching us, and I have realized that she has taught me more about science than I have ever learned in previous years."

The students can look forward to a spring project focused on water — how we get it, where it goes when we are done with it, how we keep it clean and find it in our land.

"The connections I made during my externship will allow me to bring experts from Weston & Sampson into the classroom for this project, as well as schedule field trips to see water processes in action," Ribaud-Smith said.