



Clear Path To A Bright Future: High School Grad To Optimax Apprentice

Optimax Systems (Ontario, NY) signed Noah Mueller, a 17-year old 2019 Gananda High School Graduate, to join the Optimax team following graduation. Noah will join Optimax as an Optics Manufacturing Technician in late August, soon after his 18th birthday. Noah will officially begin the NYS registered Precision Optics Manufacturing (POM) Technician Apprenticeship Program in December which will lead to his Journeyworker certificate in just three years.

Noah not only landed a great career, he made history. In June 2019 he was the first student in his high school to have an official “signing day” for being hired in industry as an Apprentice at Optimax. A momentous occasion for all involved.

Optimax has worked closely with Workforce Program Specialists at New York State DOL, to receive approval for the POM Apprenticeship and, soon to be introduced, Optimax’s registered Industrial Manufacturing Technician (IMT) Apprentice program. One of the challenges that manufacturers face is that some high school students graduate at the age of 17, such as Noah. Noah gained a great deal of technical skills and received hands-on training during his high school career by being enrolled in the Wayne Technical and Career Center (WTCC) Advanced Manufacturing program. Noah accepted a six-week paid internship at Optimax during the summer after his junior year. He continued working at Optimax as a co-op during his senior year.

Existing NYS labor laws have made it challenging to provide hands on training in the manufacturing industry due to age limitations and safety regulations. Work activities are limited unless a student is 18 years of age (post high-school). Exceptions include participation in an approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) training program within a NYS public school or Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) program (i.e. Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Certificate).

Noah states, *“The reason I chose to enter the POM Apprenticeship Program was because of many things, one of them being my family being so supportive of me along the way. Another factor that really helped was that most of my schools faculty helped me find courses I could take that helped me learn what I wanted to learn, which was manufacturing!”*

Optimax continues to offer students career exploration opportunities including job-shadows, paid internships, paid co-ops, and part-time employment. This school-to-work pathway can serve the region as a scalable model, strengthening the relationships between local schools and advanced manufacturing employers. Optimax provides students access to promising careers in a growing industry and the opportunity to become master opticians. Optimax also offers 100% tuition reimbursement towards pre-approved educational expenses.

Optimax – Manufacturing the Future.



Left to Right: Alejandro Mendoza (HR Mgr.), Noah Mueller, Erinne Chamot (HR)

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