How Career and Technical Education Can JUMPSTART A NEW INDUSTRY

Chinese Government Turns to Career-Focused Schools in Maryland for Video Game Industry Training

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While career and technical education (CTE) has been an important part of the U.S. education system for decades, other countries have been slower to adopt and develop similar types of training. Realizing that CTE is crucial to developing homegrown talent capable of competing in a 21st century economy, countries like China are reaching out to career-focused schools in the United States to assist them in developing CTE programs in order to introduce, grow and sustain industries that are new or have limited presence in certain Chinese provinces.

“While there’s much discussion about career and technical education in the United States, little is said about it in other countries,” said Larry Glenn, director of workforce development at Kaplan University’s Hagerstown, Maryland, campus.

Seeking to develop and grow a domestic video game industry, the Chinese government reached out to Kaplan to learn how career-focused schools in the United States train students to work in this highly technical and growing field.

**Training**

Kaplan has been working with the Chinese government for nearly three years to create customized training programs for multiple government entities in a variety of subject areas. The campus is one of 12 postsecondary institutions in the United States, and the only career-focused school approved by China’s government to provide educational training. (Other approved schools include Harvard and Georgetown universities.) In November 2006, the campus developed a specialized training program for Chinese security forces preparing to manage safety and security for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.

“Our training program for the security forces was well designed and effective, helping us to generate more opportunities to work with the Chinese government,” Glenn said. “These opportunities include the video game industry training programs we recently delivered.”

Kaplan was asked to create two separate training programs for delegations hailing from Guangzhou City of the Guangdong Province, and Qingdao City of the Shandong Province. Although each province had its own standards and preferences, both had the overall goal to build and sustain its own video game industry—a goal each province knew required the creation of a proper CTE program to train students, according to Glenn.

During their training in Hagerstown, the delegations participated in classroom instruction, interacted with industry professionals, and visited a variety of studios and schools. They then traveled to Los Angeles and various locations along the East Coast to visit television stations, in addition to video game, graphic design, animation and production studios. In a bid to learn how U.S. schools train their students to enter the video game industry, each delegation also visited the University of Southern California to observe its master’s degree programs.

They received training at Hagerstown’s Washington County Technical High School, which offers a game development and animation program for 11th- and 12th-graders. The school collaborates with Kaplan’s Hagerstown campus to provide international exchange and training programs for the Chinese government.

**Guangdong Province Delegation**

The first training program was developed for the Guangdong Province, which had already completed a province-wide strategic plan calling for the development and perpetuation of a graphic design, animation, production and video game industry; at the time, this industry was only in its beginning stages within the province.

“Through our training, the delegation hoped to understand the steps necessary to grow the existing industry and internally support it within the province by learning how to create new resources locally,” said Glenn. “We demonstrated how these new resources, such as technical expertise, could be acquired by duplicating the development techniques and technology used in the industry within the United States.”

Kaplan’s training, which lasted 10 days, aimed to show the delegation how to create a CTE process capable of supporting this new industry. The institution shared how it develops students for the industry and how instructors are trained.

The province wanted to develop for-credit education programs beginning at the high school level and focus on the three-year college level—the Chinese equivalent of an associate degree. The goal for these programs is to produce graduates ready for entry-level employment in the summer of 2011, therefore creating a steady stream of qualified employees by the end of 2012. The program would eventually expand at the college level to be offered at traditional colleges and universities, as well as technical colleges.

**Qingdao City Delegation**

When the Qingdao City delegation came to the campus for training, Qingdao City had no video game industry in place. Through the 15-day training it received at Kaplan, the delegation was taught how to successfully introduce this new industry to Qingdao City and identify which industry elements could become self-sus-
The time, effort and resources invested by the Chinese to implement CTE will play an integral role in the development of its graphics, animation, video gaming and production industry,” Glenn said. “They have made positive steps to build and sustain a worldwide market for their services.”

“ACTE membership is a good way to talk with your cohorts across the country and get those professional learning communities going that you miss out on if you’re in a small school like I am and you’re the only CTE teacher. It is a good way to find the people who make it work in their schools so we can share and learn from each other.”

- Julia Ray, Dare County Alternative School, Southern Shores, NC