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SWEET SUCCESS AT MILTON HERSHEY SCHOOL

By Dave Curry





areer and technical education (CTE) has been engrained in Milton Hershey School's (MHS) history for more than 100 years.

The school was founded and established by Milton Hershey, chocolate magnate and entrepreneur, and his wife Catherine in 1909 to help orphaned boys. Today, the school currently provides a cost-free education and nurturing home life year-round to more than 2,000 boys and girls, in grades pre-K through 12, from low-income backgrounds at its residential campus in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Milton Hershey often described his vision for the school, "The main objective in view is to train young men and women to useful trades and occupations, so that they can earn their own livelihood." With deep connections to the past and innovative networks to the future, the school is unwavering in its commitment to CTE. Why?

For students growing up in poverty, opportunity often feels out of reach. Students 16–24 years old from low-income families are seven times more likely to drop out than students from higher income families (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewelRamani,

2011). Career and technical education, breaks down some of the barriers to opportunity. CTE allows these students to discover their unique talents and passions at a young age and begin creating their own definitions of success.

Combine a child's passion and abilities with a caring, dedicated community of adults, and success becomes tangible. Milton Hershey School prepares disadvantaged students for 21st century careers.

A Foundation in Hands-on Learning

Milton Hershey's commitment to hands-on learning has guided the school as it developed a comprehensive CTE program.

Beginning in both the elementary and middle school levels, MHS students are exposed to career concentrations through career fairs and skills-based learning opportunities. When students enter high school, they explore 11 different career pathways before choosing one to study for the remainder of their high school career.

- Agriculture and natural resources
- Automotive technology
- Business/financial management and accounting

- Computer science and innovation
- Construction/carpentry
- Culinary arts/restaurant management services
- Electronic media and journalism
- Engineering and design
- Graphic communication technologies
- Health science
- Law, public safety and security

Within each pathway, students have access to specialized classes, professional workplace learning experiences and industry-recognized certification opportunities. To ensure the curriculum reflects the needs of local and nationwide employers, the school established advisory committees. MHS advisory committees include representatives from local industry, in each career pathway, to ensure the school's curriculum, certifications and workplace experiences meet high standards for students today and in the future.

With nearly 90 certifications offered, students are mastering the technical skills employers seek in the 21st-century workforce. In the classes of 2012 to 2017,



Milton Hershey School students in the construction and carpentry career pathway spend the school year constructing a home on campus.

100 percent of seniors at Milton Hershey School earned at least one industry-recognized certification before graduation.

For students like Jared Ross, an MHS senior who enrolled at the school in eighth grade, these certifications not only build technical skills but they allow students to explore their wide array of interests and challenge themselves with new responsibilities.

"I didn't grow up with a father around, so I kind of looked to television for male role models," said Ross. "I looked at superheroes like Tony Stark who built himself into who he is now through entrepreneurship."

With the goal of becoming an entrepreneur himself, CTE has brought his childhood dreams to life. The curriculum and certifications have allowed him to pursue his passions for art, business and technology. Ross received the IC3 Digital Literacy certification in the school's computer science and innovation pathway before successfully completing certification exams for Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign in the graphic communication technologies pathway.

Now, during his last few months of high school, Ross is working toward a certification in Adobe Premiere through the MHS electronic media and journalism pathway.

"I like responsibility because I've watched how the entrepreneurs before me operate. I feel like [these CTE opportuni-

ties] are preparing me for what I can do for the world," Ross said. "I have interests in so many things, and I want to have experience in all of them."

Many students, especially those from impoverished backgrounds, struggle to find role models who exemplify their definition of success. They might be a first-generation college student with entrepreneurial aspirations, or a female carpentry student pursuing a line of work that is unfamiliar to her family. Career and technical education can provide these students with access to opportunities rooted in skill-building and career preparation, giving them the knowledge and confidence to pursue their goals.

Access to Opportunity

To prepare students for the 21st century workforce, effective CTE curriculum must combine technical knowledge with employability skills that introduce students to the professional workplace.

Early Exposure Programming

To help students consider purposeful careers beginning as early as elementary school, early exposure programming makes CTE a natural part of the school curriculum.

Milton Hershey School's commitment to CTE starts in elementary school and carries students through high school, where they must complete a four-credit CTE requirement prior to graduation.

All students in grades five through 12 receive CTE programming in some form every year.

Through elementary career fairs, MHS students research different industries and rotate through 11 stations that give them a glimpse inside the high school's career pathways. Thanks to hands-on activities, like an augmented reality sandbox, students gain an early understanding of various careers that prepare them for skills-based education in middle school.

Authentic Work Experiences

Through internships, co-op programs and pre-apprenticeships, students have the opportunity to work in an authentic work environment and learn directly from industry professionals. Authentic work experiences demonstrate for students what happens in a given career, in a real-world environment, and gives them an opportunity to implement what they have learned in the classroom.

Strong industry partnerships can take these authentic work experiences to the next level. Milton Hershey School has an affiliation with the Hershey, Pennsylvania, business community, which makes students' work experiences more relevant and meaningful. Through local industry partnerships, students feel more connected to their community and gain a deeper understanding of how they can contribute to the local workforce. Authentic work experiences also help students discover what aspects of a particular industry or career they might not like.

"CTE gives students a chance to explore something they may be interested in, and maybe they'll realize they aren't interested in it. They can use that information in their postsecondary pursuits," said Ross.

Whether students want to join the military, enter the world of work or pursue higher education, authentic work experiences allow them to discover their strengths in the field they hope to pursue in the very near future.

Technical Skill-building

Guest speakers, hands-on lessons and job shadowing opportunities are significant

aspects of CTE programming. These interactions give students more autonomy and independence, and their career goals begin to feel more real.

For example, in the construction and carpentry pathway at MHS, students spend the school year constructing a home on campus. In the school's engineering and design pathway, architects and engineers from local firms visit classes and describe their experience working with clients and creating designs. When students develop their skills by interacting with professionals and completing hands-on projects, they develop a stronger sense of purpose and motivation.

Industry-recognized Certifications

Teaching technical skills is an important part of CTE programming, but industry-recognized certification opportunities give students an additional advantage: an impressive résumé.

All students can earn state- and nationally recognized certifications that not only expose them to the skills needed in the field, but will allow them to build a résumé that will impress employers.

Within the school's 11 career pathways, students have 88 industry-recognized

certification opportunities. For students like Jared Ross, these certifications provide a clearer understanding of how to market themselves.

Employability Skills

To complement technical skills and certifications, employability skills allow students to develop professional etiquette that is transferrable to nearly every career.

Educators infuse employability skills into the curriculum where it's appropriate. Basic etiquette lessons students may not receive at home or elsewhere, combine technical knowledge with employability skills, so students have all they need to be successful in their future work environment.

College Classes

College and AP-level classes enhance the CTE curriculum. Through individualized, advanced instruction taught by college professors, students can accelerate their college education, especially if they have their sights set on a highly competitive university. MHS offers nine college classes on campus through its CTE program.



Milton Hershey School

Milton Hershey School began as a dream and vision shared by Hershey Chocolate Company Founder Milton S. Hershey and his wife Catherine (Kitty). Unable to have children of their own, Milton and Kitty decided to use their wealth to create a home and a school for orphaned boys. On Nov. 15, 1909, they signed the Deed of Trust establishing the Hershey Industrial School, renamed Milton Hershey School in 1951.

Today, Milton Hershey School thrives as a cost-free, private, coeducational home and school for more than 2,000 children from families of lower income. Milton Hershey School offers a positive, structured home life year-round and an excellent pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade education. The school focuses on building character and providing children with the skills necessary to be successful in all aspects of life.

In addition to a rigorous academic program, the school emphasizes college and career readiness for its students. Every high school student has the opportunity to accrue \$90,000 in scholarship money for postsecondary education. About 85 percent of graduating seniors go on to college or trade school to further their education, and many are first-generation college-goers.



Jared Ross, MHS senior, has entrepreneurial aspirations. Through the school's CTE program, he has received four certifications.



Summer internships provide MHS students with the opportunity to work in an authentic work environment and learn directly from industry professionals.

"I'm taking my third college course on the MHS campus. They're definitely more challenging, but I feel like MHS students are taught how to handle it," Ross explained. "It teaches me how college professors operate and puts more autonomy and responsibility on me. It gives me a jumpstart."

The responsibility of managing college classes can build students' confidence and ability to embrace challenges. Opportunities to earn college credits are especially important for low-income students who may be first-generation college students, giving them the time and space to confirm if college is the right path.

Apprenticeships

For high-school students, pre-apprenticeships allow them to work in their desired trade or industry prior to graduation. Pre-apprenticeship programs have the potential to transform traditional academics and connect work-based learning experiences to a career directly after graduation. Students who complete a pre-apprenticeship have the opportunity to begin a full-time apprenticeship immediately after graduation, after fulfilling in-class and on-the-job training hours in high school.

For low-income students, pre-apprenticeship opportunities can help them dis-

cover fulfilling careers that allow them to achieve success even if they cannot afford postsecondary education.

Forward-thinking CTE Curriculum

Career and technical education gives students of all demographics access to opportunities that might have once felt unattainable. Along with technical skill-building and professional development, CTE teaches an even bigger lesson: the power of creating dreams.

"I understand I might be unreasonable in my ambitions, but I value that. I feel like it's my responsibility to get my ideas out there," Ross said.

What may seem unreasonable before is no longer inaccessible when students have the tools to embrace responsibility, knowledge-sharing and workplace learning. It is essential for CTE programs to stay up-to-date with industry trends and knowledge in order to maintain these possibilities and equip students with the best tools and resources.

Providing students with a forward-thinking CTE curriculum gives them more choice and voice in the classroom, and guides them as they become the individuals who will lead the 21st-century workforce. ■

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