

Working Together for a Better Workforce



As a sophomore at Brownstown Central High School in Brownstown, Indiana, Levi Hinderlider thought he knew what a manufacturing job would be like.

“I basically thought it was people standing in a factory on the same spot doing the same thing every day,” he says.

But Brownstown Central teacher Dan Schwartz helped change that through Hire Technology, a two-year course that prepares students to work in the growing fields of advanced manufacturing and logistics.

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Students from Brownstown Central High School’s Hire Technology class visit with a Brownstown Central graduate, Levi Hinderlider, as they tour his workplace, the Toyota Industrial Equipment factory near Columbus, Indiana.





By the end of his senior year in 2014, Hinderlider had earned six college credits, gained hands-on, industry-related training, and landed a job offer from Toyota Industrial Equipment Manufacturing Inc. in nearby Columbus, Indiana.

A year later, Hinderlider is working for Toyota. He is part of the company's leadership-trainee program and he has a new view of manufacturing. "It is way different from what I thought. Every day is a different challenge," he says.

Hire Technology was created by Conexus Indiana, an initiative of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP). In 2014 Lilly Endowment awarded a \$3.6 million grant to the CICP Foundation so that Conexus could expand programs to provide training and information about Indiana's advanced manufacturing and logistics companies through education and outreach.

Hire Technology, created in partnership with Ivy Tech Community College and the Indiana Department of Education, is developing a pipeline of talent for industry. Launched in 2012 with nine high schools, Hire Technology plans to reach 186 schools in 110 locations throughout Indiana by fall 2015. So far, approximately 2,000 students have earned college credit toward a degree or certificate with Ivy Tech Community College.

At Brownstown Central, all 26 students who have completed the Hire Technology course have earned college credit. In addition to Hinderlider, a second student was hired directly out of high school, and others have gone on to internships or are continuing their education, according to Schwartz, an industrial technology teacher.

A veteran of 35 years in the classroom, Schwartz says Hire Technology is a curriculum that works.

"It's helped me be the teacher I always wanted to be because I am helping students gain skills they can begin using right away," Schwartz (left) says. "We're seeing students at the end of their senior year ready for job interviews. The end result is very positive."



More than a curriculum, Hire Technology trains teachers, too, as they engage students and inspire success. Instructional guides help teachers connect content to what companies want in career-ready workers. And teachers have “industry partners,” Indiana companies whose staff share the real world of advanced manufacturing and logistics.

“When students leave high school with opportunities waiting for them, it’s clear you’ve got a winning program, supported by dedicated teachers and industry,” says Claudia Cummings, vice president of Workforce and Education at Conexus Indiana. “We are pleased that these opportunities include options: good-paying jobs right after high school, internships, or the opportunity to continue an education in college or certificate programs.”

Closing the skills gap

Conexus Indiana has developed Hire Technology and other student-focused programs to help fill the skills gap in advanced manufacturing and logistics. At issue: The next generation of workers needs more than a high school diploma



in order to work in emerging fields of alternative energy, green vehicle production, nanotechnology and aerospace. An associate’s degree or specialized high-tech certificate can make the difference, Cummings says. Advanced courses during high school, such as those provided through Hire Technology, prepare students for these next steps.

The situation is critical for Indiana, which ranks 35th in the nation in the number of adults holding associate’s degrees, the group most likely to succeed in advanced manufacturing and logistics jobs. And nationwide, more than 75 percent of manufacturers report a moderate to severe shortage of skilled workers, according to a 2014 study by the Manufacturing Institute.

“Help wanted” is a nearly constant theme at Toyota Industrial Equipment Manufacturing, where Hinderlider landed his job. The facility has been manufacturing forklifts for 25 years but in recent years has found it difficult to find skilled workers, according to Steve Pride, senior manager of human resources, training and compliance at the Toyota facility in Columbus.



The Toyota facility is one of 10 industry partners in the Hire Technology program at Brownstown Central. The new strategy for developing leaders for a new, better-skilled workforce is already paying off, Pride says, adding, “Individuals like Levi have hit the ground running.”

As for Hinderlider, he plans to continue his education by enrolling in a manufacturing technology degree program in fall 2015 while continuing to work at Toyota. “I just want to try my best to make it as far as I can here,” he says.

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Students earn college credit by completing the Hire Technology course, which at Brownstown Central High School includes field trips to advanced manufacturing facilities.