

STEM Edutainment: Now Showing in Classrooms

BY CYNTHIA D. MILLER

No matter how intriguing scientific and mathematical theory may be, students truly love and remember a great story. The best teachers understand this concept when they reinforce basic principles with exciting projects to both entertain and educate their students.

In 2009, Chicago-based Defined Learning announced a partnership with The Futures Channel, a producer of videos showcasing real-life professionals who use math and science in interesting professions. The two companies created a partnership service called “Defined STEM” that allows teachers to download self-contained units of study including subject recommendations, lesson plans, related websites, teacher guides and state standards that are complementary to The Futures Channels’ library of videos and clips.

The videos explain how professionals use STEM disciplines on a daily basis in their vocations. They are produced to answer students’ age-old question: “Why do I have to learn this?” The videos’ topics include everything from using math and science to create music, cakes, parade floats, roller coasters, toys, backpacks and sports equipment, managing the global economy and other more traditional engineering and scientific feats.

“Defined STEM is used as a springboard into Project Based Learning which accomplishes two goals,” said Joel Jacobson, executive vice president of business development. “First, it infuses STEM into the curriculum, and at the same time it incorporates 21st Century skills through the project based environment. Add to that the input we receive from the professionals and educators who create the ancillary tools that accompany each video, and we have created a social education network at its best.”

For more information, see www.definedlearning.com.

Similarly, Global Imagination, a company also founded by former entertainment

executives, was created to “change the way people see, understand and act upon global information.” The company’s main product is the Magic Planet digital video globe, available in sizes from 16 inches to 10 feet in diameter, with optics housed beneath each globe to project 360 degrees. Accompanying lesson plans for science, geography, social science and history topics complete and enhance the viewing experience.

Educators and clients can choose from an existing gallery of exhibits, animations and templates or create customized programs that may include touch-screen presentations. “One look at a Magic Planet demonstration and you’ll not only understand how they effectively communicate global information and global context, but you’ll also feel how they help to tell compelling stories,” said CEO Mike Foody.



In 2009, President Obama used a Magic Planet globe provided by NASA Goddard Space Flight Center when he announced his administration’s “Educate to Innovate” campaign aimed at encouraging students to pursue STEM disciplines. NASA uses the Magic Plan-

et to help the public understand its earth science and space missions.

The Magic Planet is being integrated into school curricula both domestically and globally. Magic Planet exhibits are located at the American Museum of Natural History, the National Aquarium and the Smithsonian Institution’s Earth from Space exhibit. For more information, see: www.globalimagination.com.

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ICAF Doubles Numbers of Private Industry Students

■ **In response to** recently passed legislation, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces has doubled the number of students from private industry who will be accepted into its Industry Fellows program. ICAF is currently compiling applications and will accept 20 young leaders from the private sector to study at the college.

ICAF Industry Fellows receive a year-long, executive-level education resulting in a master’s degree. They study and debate topics such as the global economy and the impact of globalization on national security, and the relationship between the economy and the current U.S. military strategy.

Fellows examine senior executive leadership skills and lessons drawn both from U.S. and world history and from contemporary events and challenges. As part of the Industry Studies Program, they conduct field studies both within the United States and internationally with members of the military, government agencies and

international fellows to study various industries and their contribution to national security.

Industry participation added to the military and civilian government mix helps build the new relationships and trust the nation needs to address its integrated military, economic and societal challenges, said ICAF Commandant Rear Adm. Garry Hall.

“We must strengthen and revitalize the relationship between the American public and private sectors. Much of our future will depend on our leaders’ ability to collaborate between government and industry through relationships grounded in shared experience, trust and confidence,” said Hall.

The degree program begins on Aug. 9, and graduation is June 9, 2011. A brochure and frequently asked questions and answers about the Industry Fellows Program can be found on the ICAF website at www.ndu.edu/icaf.