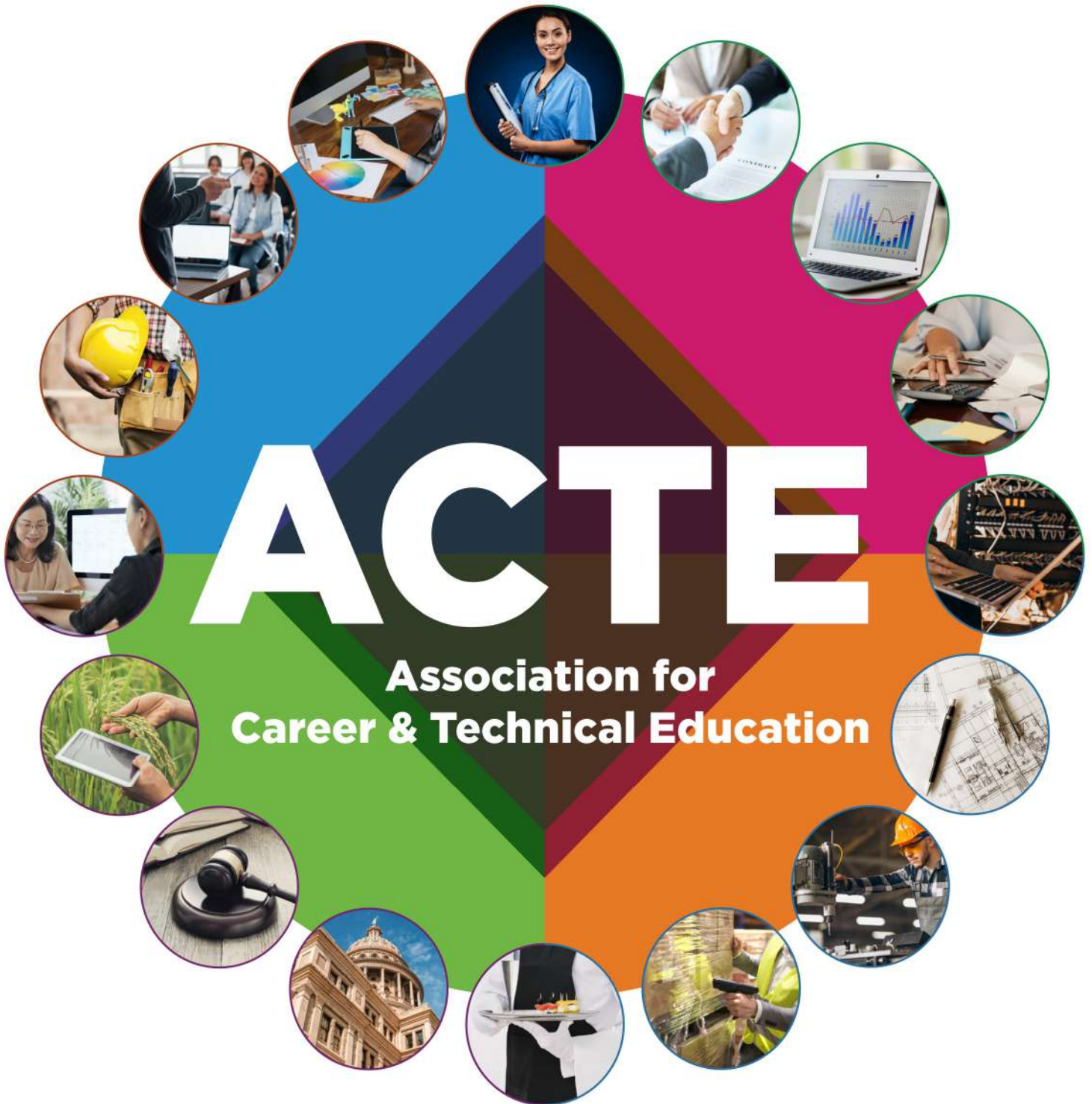


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ACTE

Association for
Career & Technical Education

Get into the ACTE

by: R.D. Gibson



Remember back to when that time in primary school. Recess just finished and the teacher was having a class discussion about the future, or there were a series of icebreakers. The question comes up: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

The usual roll call is yelled out.

"Policeman!"

"Fireman!"

"Doctor!"

"Nurse!"

"Teacher!"

"Governor!"

"President!"

Yet, other very important occupations can be left off the list of popular titles. In a New York Times article titled "Stop Asking Kids What They Want to Be When They Grow Up", the author Adam Grant discusses the concept of asking about careers at a young age. Grant stated that one of the problems with this idea of "choosing" a career so early is that it implies there is only "one calling out there for everyone." He also wrote about how the question forces students to think of themselves in terms of work. "When we define ourselves by our jobs, our worth depends on what we achieve," he wrote.

Sure, it is great to have a goal/goals in mind; aspirations. But, it is also important to have options. Options that can pay, prepare you for bigger opportunities, and bring some sense of accomplishment and joy.

Additionally, we cannot simply categorize education as "A-B-C's" and "1-2-3's" anymore. It was never really that simple to begin with, but the school cannot be the only place to jumpstart and nurture career ideas and options. Especially in this day and age with extensive access to information and a growing number of new careers in new industries.

Over 100 years ago in the United States, the idea of career technical education was born according to Dr. Sam Mabini Young, the Executive Director of the Guam Association for Career and Technical Education. "In 1906, 250 individuals from businesses and education met in New York City to form the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE)...to promote industrial education by focusing the public's attention on the value of an education system that prepares youth to enter industrial pursuits," stated Dr. Young.

Since its inception, the organization has gone through several name changes, but all with the same idea of vocational and career readiness education programs at the core. The ACTE name would settle finally in 1998, and still provides "educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce" namely through Career and Technical Education (CTE). According to the ACTE website, "The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) is the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers." It represents a network of CTE professionals, "including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, guidance and career development professionals and others at all levels of education."

Since 2015 there has been a Guam chapter named Guam ACTE, made up of local, dedicated CTE professionals. The organization focuses on CTE, raising awareness, promoting advocacy, fostering local research, providing technical assistance, engaging in networking activities, assisting in policy development, and acts as a resource clearinghouse.

Dr. Young stated that Guam educators and businesses all have a vested interest in the success of graduating students. She stated local businesses want employees who are prepared after graduation. "This ties to the need to recover and grow Guam's economy through the development of the island's human resources," stated Dr. Young.

Since the early 1990s, Dr. Young has supported Career and Technical Education as the local community college was transitioning from the Guam Vocational Technical High School. She stated how she has a passion for helping students succeed beyond the classroom. "I eventually became active in ACTE...and learned firsthand the positive impact of ACTE's state chapters on education and the economy," Dr. Young stated.

The conception of the Guam ACTE chapter came after a resolution was presented to Dr. Young to develop Career and Technical Education throughout the Western Pacific Region. Since 2012, the Guam ACTE serves American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, according to their website.

Dr. Young stated, "Guam ACTE aims to raise awareness and advocate for quality CTE programs, helping bridge successfully trained workforce and industry demands." Adding how there is a value in CTE and the growth of industries and flourishing careers. She pointed to construction and hospitality and tourism, as well as emerging industries like cybersecurity, and renewable and alternative energy, where the Guam ACTE is working continuously to shine a spotlight. "Today's CTE is about preparing youth and adults for high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers," stated Dr. Young.

There are several divisions that range from health sciences, business, and the trades. The Guam ACTE also provides an opportunity for outreach and professional development programs, such as a Career Day that has been ongoing since April for Guam educators in the public school system. It is being offered as an online training series on Workforce Readiness and Employment Insights of Island Businesses. "This concept of Career Day for Teachers is the first of its kind [being] offered", which allows for teachers to interact with the business communities to gain insight into better preparing graduating students for life beyond the classroom.

These weekly workshops have expanded networks and emphasized collaboration between teachers and businesses. Moreover, it's allowed for teachers to receive certification and graduate credits. "Guam ACTE had met with leaders from the public schools to discuss how best to assist teachers," stated Dr. Young. Additionally, this brings educators throughout the region to collaborate and learn with one another. Dr. Young cited how there were almost 200 participants at the first session; currently there are 60 teachers officially registered through the University of Guam, and, at times, there can be 100 individuals at times during the sessions. "It's an exciting opportunity to connect in real time our teachers with business leaders, who are eager to play their role in education by sharing their insights," she added.

Guam ACTE Programs like the Workforce Readiness and Employment Insights of Island Businesses are supported significantly by its members the Board of Guam ACTE, including the President, Dr. Bert Johnston of the GCA Trades Academy, Vice President, Eric Chong, and Secretary/Treasurer Rose Marie Nanpei. Dr. Young stated, "The board and all active members of this professional organization continue to be committed to building partnerships with businesses and all educators, hoping

to garner support and membership from all those vested in building a strong workforce for Guam businesses and the economy."

Dr. Sam Mabini Young originally wrote the College and Career Readiness Act (CCaRe Act) of Guam, P.L. 31-156 when she was a senator in the 31st Guam Legislature. Through the legislation, "the Guam Department of Education is mandated to align and integrate their required academic subjects and Career and technical Education (CTE) methods to prepare every student for a higher education and a broad career field." Dr. Young stated her work continues as the Executive Director of Guam ACTE.

More information about the Guam ACTE can be found on their website at <https://www.acteonline.org/guam-association-for-career-and-technical-education/>.

Education is sparked by interest. Our curiosity about topics, concepts, and skills revolves around those that grab our attention. Guam ACTE's mission is "to support effective integration of Career and Technical Education in schools in Guam and the western Pacific region that will improve student success in their career pathways." It seems that a big part of that mission is expanding the professional development and training opportunities provided to educators to make their curriculum relevant and exciting, creating and strengthening networks beyond the walls of school buildings - working with and learning from potential employers, and ultimately teaching those relevant topics and skills to an up-and-coming workforce. Maybe the question isn't so much "what do you want to be when you grow up?" as much as it is "what are you interested in doing?" That gives us way more options.