As the economy and everyday experience of consumers becomes increasingly digital, it is vital that education is able to prepare students for the brave new world of digitalization. Digitalization refers to the integration of digital technologies into the everyday experiences of people. This integration has a significant economic impact with the services, technologies and products constituting what is known as the digital economy. While digital economic interests once comprised only a portion of the economy, according to the Harvard Business Review, the economy itself has become digital. In the wake of this new economic reality, it is critical that students have a comprehensive understanding and technical aptitude for emerging digital technologies.

The Digital Media and Sound Communication program at the Technical College High School (TCHS) Pickering campus, located in Chester County, will be used as an example of how educational institutions can prepare students for the digital economy.

The importance of sound in the digital economy

Famed public intellectual Marshall McLuhan noted that as society increasingly began to rely on electronic technologies, the importance of sight was replaced with a renewed emphasis on sound. This is certainly the case now, as seen by the role of sound communication in the digital economy.

For example, a sound engineering technician can earn a median salary of $41,780 per year. The job growth for this career is expected to increase by 7% over the next seven years. The demand for sound engineering technicians is particularly high in Pennsylvania. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) ranks Pennsylvania as having the 6th highest sound engineering technician employment opportunities nationwide.

The economic opportunity in digital media for Pennsylvania

The BLS also ranks Pennsylvania as having the 7th highest film & video editor and camera operator employment opportunities nationwide. These positions provide a crucial service to fueling both the entertainment and technical sectors of the digital economy. The median salary for these positions is $55,740 per year, with an expected 11% job growth over the next seven years as the digital economy expands.

A Model of Success

TCHS Pickering’s Digital Media and Sound Communication program offers students a hands-on approach to navigating the digital economy. The TCHS Pickering model serves as a case study for what can happen when education brings together theory and industry to give students the tools they need to be successful.