Hard work is the usual modus operandi of students at the prestigious Chengdu No. 7 International School for grades 10–12 in the city of Chengdu, China. But in addition to regular coursework required for a Chinese diploma, many students sign up for challenging online subjects such as American literature, English, and other science and math courses for a good reason: to earn a U.S. diploma.

They’re able to accomplish this through the school’s Portfolio Partnership with K12, America’s leader in online education for grades K-12, which provides online courses to Chengdu students. They use high school curriculum from The Keystone School—one of three online private academies operated by K12.

“[Through our K12 relationship], students are able to demonstrate successful immersion in a U.S. high school curriculum, which is one quality that American universities try to identify in international students,” says Chengdu No. 7 International School Principal, Esther Yang.

Before the availability of Keystone courses, the high school was already considered one of the area’s best institutions to prepare students for higher education. Now, it’s become something even greater—a place where students can launch their international education and their careers. In addition, with K12, students are exposed to U.S. culture, content, and style. It’s a taste of American education and of America, as well.

During their rigorous assessment, Yang and her colleagues took the time to ensure K12 was the right online education provider. What gave them confidence was the wide variety of programs K12 offered. “We were impressed by the full range of online products provided by K12,” says Yang. “We knew that, with K12, we could design a special international high school program for those students who seek both a Chinese and U.S. diploma.”
In Yang’s Portfolio Partnership, Chengdu teachers lead traditional lectures using content from Keystone courses. “The Keystone courses are delivered in a similar face-to-face format as other subjects, except the assessment is done completely online by Keystone teachers,” says Yang. “Keystone teachers are professional, responsible, and diligent. Students always receive grades and feedback soon after submitting their assignments.” According to Yang, a typical day of school for Chengdu students combines Keystone courses, Chinese high school required courses, English language courses, and a self-study session. “Usually, students can also learn online by themselves in the evening or weekend,” she says.

To receive the Keystone diploma, students must complete a minimum of five Keystone courses. They can choose from a total of nine courses that Yang and her colleagues have preselected from the Keystone catalog—which includes more than 170 courses—to complement the Chinese curriculum. “We’ve selected courses that are challenging and comprehensive to Chinese high school students,” says Yang.

K12 worked hard to ensure the program launch went smoothly. “K12 provided online orientation and training sessions several times for our staff and teachers before the official launch,” says Yang. “They clearly explained the web platform features and course management procedures. We received timely help with student registration and book ordering/shipping, as well.” In addition to the online program, many courses include an offline component, such as materials to complete science labs.

Since the Keystone courses became available, more than 200 Chengdu students have signed up for the American diploma track. The attraction is clear: real access to an acclaimed, internationally recognized curriculum. “The courses are beneficial to students’ overall performance,” concludes Yang. “And K12 is a quality-focused and trustworthy partner.”

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Esther Yang
Principal, Chendu No. 7 International School

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