

School news.



Partnering with Industry

*Ensuring Job-Relevant
CTE Facilities and
Programs*

Winter 2026

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PHOTO BY LAWRENCE ANDERSON

As school districts continue planning for what's next—rapidly evolving workforce demands, emerging technologies, and shifting student needs—career and technical education (CTE) is becoming one of the most powerful tools to bridge learning with real-world opportunity.

The theme of this winter issue, CTE, highlights a growing truth: today's career pathways are more dynamic, more interdisciplinary, and more essential than ever. A narrow set of trades or a single student demographic no longer defines CTE. Instead, it's an equity-driven investment in relevance—creating meaningful options for every learner, and helping districts prepare students for futures that may not even exist yet.

In these pages, you'll explore how industry partnerships can strengthen job-aligned programs, why earlier exposure to career pathways is gaining momentum, and how student voice is shaping what effective CTE environments look and feel like. We're also sharing practical guidance to help districts navigate the funding process—because turning a grand vision into a built reality requires strategy as much as inspiration.

Finally, you'll find a continued thread of trauma-informed design, reinforcing that hands-on learning thrives best in spaces that support well-being, belonging, and confidence.

We're proud to share this issue with you—and we hope it sparks new ideas, new conversations, and new momentum as you shape the next generation of learning environments. ●

By Brian Meyers

PreK-12 Practice Leader



As PreK-12 practice leader, **Brian** is responsible for the strategic planning, direction, and management of the firm's PreK-12 practice. He has over 30 years of experience spanning all aspects of educational planning and design.

Brian Meyers

Partnering with Industry

Ensuring Job-Relevant CTE Facilities and Programs

**By Michael
Davis** AIA
Principal-in-Charge



*As an educational design leader, **Michael Davis** has worked on projects of all types and scales, encompassing a wide range of educational delivery models—from traditional departmental organizations to integrated academies. Over the past nine years, he has led the design and construction of numerous PreK-12 projects, including five comprehensive high schools. Driven by metrics, Michael aligns design with budget and function, maximizing value for each project. His work reflects a deep understanding of educational trends and delivers adaptable schools prepared to serve students well into the twenty-first century.*

One of the most powerful lessons in designing career and technical education (CTE) facilities is deceptively simple: when schools are deeply connected to industry, students thrive. When programs are shaped by real employers, real workforce needs, and real professional expectations, CTE becomes more than a class—it becomes a viable and transformative pathway.

Early in my career, I witnessed this firsthand at Shorewood High School, just north of Seattle, where I worked closely with two exceptional educators. One led a culinary arts program that operated as a professional restaurant. Students wore chef uniforms, learned plating and service, catered community events, and prepared meals using produce they grew themselves.

Another instructor blended automotive technology, robotics, and fabrication into a hands-on engineering environment. These were not simulated exercises; they were authentic, industry-informed experiences that treated students as emerging professionals.

These programs succeeded because they were grounded in the realities of the workplace. The instructors brought industry experience, understood professional expectations, and cultivated relationships with community partners. Their classrooms mirrored the environments students would eventually enter. That alignment—education informed by industry—is what makes CTE effective.

FROM BACK LOT TO CENTER STAGE

Historically, vocational programs were often relegated to the margins of the campus. Auto shops and wood shops were pushed to the edges, physically and culturally separating students from the academic core. This isolation reinforced stereotypes and constrained opportunity.

Today's most successful CTE programs reverse that model. They are integrated, visible, and connected.

At schools such as Roosevelt High School in Portland and Evergreen High School in Seattle, CTE programs were embedded within learning communities rather than hidden away. Glass walls revealed fabrication spaces. At the same time, culinary labs and shops were positioned adjacent to central commons. Learning was made visible.

That visibility matters. When students see peers designing, building, cooking, coding, and creating, it reshapes perceptions of learning. CTE becomes aspirational rather than remedial. And when these spaces are designed with direct input from industry partners, they remain relevant as workforce needs evolve.



Evergreen High School, Seattle, Washington



PHOTO BY JEFF AMBRAM

Shorewood High School, Shoreline, Washington

“When programs are shaped by real employers, real workforce needs, and real professional expectations, CTE becomes more than a class—it becomes a viable and transformative pathway.”

LEARNING FROM INDUSTRY, NOT GUESSING

One of the most common missteps in CTE planning is designing programs in isolation. When educators and designers attempt to predict workforce needs five or ten years out without industry guidance, programs inevitably lag. Industry partners remove this guesswork. They clarify which equipment matters, identify emerging technologies, and articulate real workforce gaps. When these voices are present at the planning table, both facilities and curricula reflect reality.

West Sound Technical Skills Center (West Sound Tech) in Bremerton, Washington, offers a compelling example. Recently completed by Bassetti Architects, A Design Studio of HMC Architects, the modernization and expansion of the campus serve students ages sixteen to twenty-one from more than a dozen districts across western Puget Sound. Programs span welding, automotive technology and collision repair, construction, criminal justice, fire science, cosmetology, esthetics, 3D animation, medical careers, maritime studies, and the planned return of HVAC training.

West Sound Tech provides hands-on, workforce-aligned education at no tuition cost. Many students travel hours each day to attend—clear evidence of the program’s value.

From the outset, industry partners helped define what success would look like. Welding programs align with shipyard, sheet metal, aluminum, and construction trades. Automotive facilities mirror commercial shops. Culinary programs operate as working restaurants. Healthcare spaces reflect clinical environments.

The result is a comprehensive workforce pipeline. Graduates move directly into shipyards, construction firms, repair shops, and medical facilities, while others pursue apprenticeships, advanced training, or higher education. Employers trust the programs because they helped shape them—and that trust is invaluable.

LEADERSHIP THAT BUILDS BRIDGES

Strong partnerships do not happen by accident; they require intentional leadership. At West Sound Tech, former director Shaney Watkins exemplified this approach by relentlessly cultivating relationships with employers. She established advisory boards, organized highly successful “Try a Trade” days, hosted mock interviews, and brought professionals into classrooms while sending students into real workplaces. Industry partners were treated as collaborators, not sponsors.

PHOTO BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER



Raisbeck Aviation High School, Tukwila, Washington

“Industry partners remove this guesswork. They clarify which equipment matters, identify emerging technologies, and articulate real workforce gaps.”

These efforts reshaped the school’s culture. Students gained not only technical skills but also professionalism, communication abilities, and a clear understanding of workplace expectations. The programs also helped dismantle stereotypes. Automotive and welding programs enrolled many young women, while healthcare and construction attracted diverse student populations. CTE became a space defined by opportunity rather than limitation.

AVIATION AS A MODEL FOR INTEGRATION

Few fields demonstrate the power of industry-aligned education more clearly than aviation in the Seattle region—one of the nation’s largest aerospace hubs.

At Raisbeck Aviation High School (RAHS), all learning is framed through aviation and aerospace. This public, STEM-focused school serves approximately four hundred students in grades nine through twelve from across Puget Sound. Core academics are integrated with aviation-related electives, including aerospace engineering, robotics, and aviation business. Physics becomes aerodynamics. Mathematics becomes navigation. Engineering becomes aircraft design.

Students build solar cars, test wings in wind tunnels, and work with mentors from major aerospace and aviation organizations. The relevance of their education is never abstract—it is visible every day.

Bassetti Architects, A Design Studio of HMC Architects, served as architect for the RAHS facility, providing planning, programming, educational specifications, and design. The firm’s relationship with the school began when classes were held in portables and has continued through ongoing mentorship and partnership.

In the Central Kitsap School District, aviation pathways begin as early as sixth grade. Middle school students use flight simulators, while high school students explore air traffic control, drone operations, and manufacturing processes. Some graduate with Federal Aviation Administration certifications and move directly into aerospace careers.

At Fairview Middle School, students engage in immersive, mission-based learning environments that apply science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in real-world contexts. Industry partnerships shape equipment selection, provide mentorship, and create feedback loops that keep programs current. This is alignment in practice.

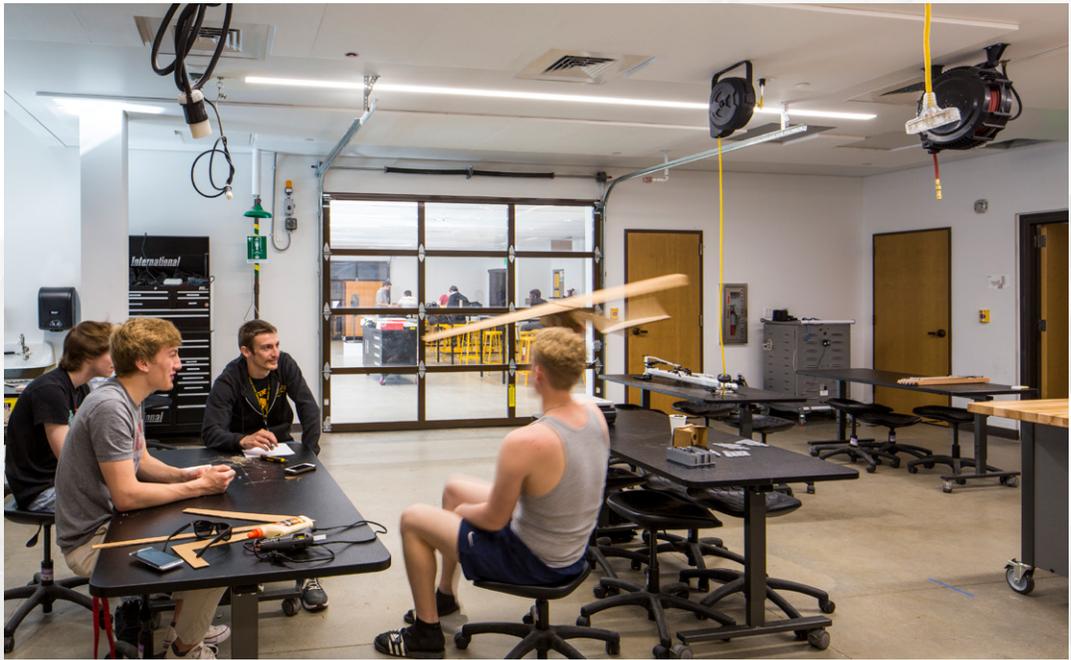


PHOTO BY JEFF AMBRAM

Roosevelt High School, Portland, Oregon

“When career and technical education is aligned with industry, its impact extends far beyond the classroom.”

HUMAN-CENTERED SKILLS IN AN AI-DRIVEN ECONOMY

The economy is undergoing a profound transformation as artificial intelligence reshapes administrative, financial, and analytical work. Many traditional office roles will be automated or redefined. Yet skilled trades, technical manufacturing, healthcare support, construction, and maintenance remain fundamentally human endeavors—and demand for these roles continues to grow.

AI cannot weld ship hulls, repair aircraft engines, install HVAC systems, or build homes. These jobs require judgment, dexterity, and adaptability. At the same time, the United States faces acute shortages in nearly every technical field.¹ For decades, students were encouraged to view success solely through the lens of four-year degrees, while technical careers were undervalued. Training pipelines weakened, apprenticeships declined, and recruitment faltered.

The consequences are now evident in labor shortages, delayed projects, rising costs, and strained communities. When aligned with industry, CTE is one of the most effective tools available to reverse this trend.

THINKING BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS

Despite the success of existing programs, access remains a challenge. Many students travel long distances to attend skills centers, while family responsibilities, transportation costs, or work schedules constrain others. Adults seeking retraining often lack flexible options. If workforce development is truly a priority, the scale and structure of CTE must expand.

What if CTE programs were embedded in community centers? What if evening and weekend training were commonplace? What if parents and students learned side by side?

Imagine a shared community hub where children attend after-school programs while parents train in HVAC, aviation maintenance, or medical assisting in the same facility. Such models could remove barriers, support working families, and transform underutilized buildings into engines of opportunity.

CTE AS A SOURCE OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

When career and technical education is aligned with industry, its impact extends far beyond the classroom. Students gain marketable skills. Families gain financial stability.

Employers gain reliable pipelines of trained workers. Communities become more resilient and economically sustainable. Graduates avoid crushing debt as they enter the workforce with dignity and long-term growth potential.

CTE also expands our understanding of intelligence and success. Creativity, craftsmanship, problem-solving, and perseverance are as valuable as test scores. Many students who struggle in traditional academic environments thrive when given hands-on challenges—a welding torch, a design project, a professional kitchen, or a flight simulator—because these settings honor how they learn best.

As technology reshapes work and inequality continues to challenge communities, CTE offers a practical and powerful source of hope. When grounded in strong industry partnerships, it connects learning to life, transforms education into opportunity, and builds sustainable futures—one skill, one partnership, and one student at a time. ●

¹According to a survey of more than four hundred employers conducted by the Washington Business Association, 38 percent cite the lack of qualified workers as their greatest challenge. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that for every 100 available jobs in Washington State, only seventy-seven skilled workers are currently available.

Navigating the CTE Funding Application Process

Getting the maximum funding available for your district requires the right strategy, timing, and applications. The following is a brief summary of current California-specific information from the HMC School Advisors team.

California Proposition 2, passed in November 2024, includes \$600 million in career and technical education (CTE) funding. The funding can be used for both new construction and/or modernization projects. Accessing CTE funding is a two-part, competitive application process.

PART ONE

Career and Technical Education Facility Grant Program (CTEFGP) applications must be submitted to the [California Department of Education \(CDE\)](#) for review and scoring.

Applications must score at least 105 points to be considered for funding. The eighth filing round for CTE funding was approved at the January 2026 State Allocation Board (SAB) meeting—this will include the remaining \$300 million from Proposition 2, as well as any funds returned to the program. The CDE electronic filing round opens on **October 16, 2026**, and closes on December 1, 2026.

Items to consider and plan for:

- Schematic design that includes:
 - floor plans with area/dimensions
 - location of furniture and equipment identified
- Letters of support
- Industry partners
- A board resolution supporting the application
- A detailed construction cost estimate

PART TWO

Districts will need to submit a Form SAB 50-10 to the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC). Projects that received a passing score in the 7th Funding Round will need to submit their Form SAB 50-10 to the OPSC by June 30, 2026. OPSC will bring the approved projects to the SAB before December 2026.

RESERVATION OF FUNDS

CTEFGP applications do not require DSA-approved plans. Districts may apply for a reservation of funds. Applications that receive reservation of funds through the OPSC will have 12 months to submit a CDE plan approval letter and a DSA plan approval letter.

FULL FUNDING/CONSTRUCTION-READY REIMBURSEMENT

Projects that already have CDE and DSA plan approval may apply for full funding. Projects that have been built and occupied may apply for a reimbursement through the CTEFGP. When submitting to OPSC for funding, a CTE-specific CDE approval letter is required.

FACILITY MASTER PLAN REQUIREMENT

CTE applications are subject to the Proposition 2 requirement of a five-year facilities master plan. This must be submitted 18 months after funding or at the time of your 100% complete expenditure report. Projects will also need to participate in the priority in funding rounds once a reservation of funds (an approval) is received.

To initiate a specific conversation about your district's CTE funding, please contact [Julie Strauss](#), PreK-12 market leader and director of HMC School Advisors. ●



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Q+A

From Bassetti to HMC, Meet Managing Principal Joe Echeverri

As managing principal in the Portland office of Bassetti Architects, now a design studio of HMC Architects, Joe Echeverri brings deep West Coast experience and a steady, people-first approach to designing schools that support students, staff, and communities. With a background rooted in the Pacific Northwest and a perspective shaped by HMC's broader reach across California and beyond, Joe shares what school leaders are prioritizing right now—plus practical insights on planning, phasing, and the growing potential of mass timber.

Q *What's one move districts can make early that helps protect budget, schedule, and trust—especially when building on an occupied campus?*

A Much of my work has involved building on occupied campuses, and a consistent factor in successful outcomes—across budget, schedule, and trust—is assembling a team that is collaborative, communicative, and open-minded in finding creative solutions.

Equally important is not shortchanging the early planning phase. Building the right team, then taking the time to “plan the plan,” and clearly communicating that strategy to school administrators and staff is critical. That early alignment helps manage expectations, builds confidence, and ultimately earns support for the project's goals.

Q *What's a design decision you've seen consistently improve the everyday experience for students and staff—and why?*

A Designing with an emphasis on ample, balanced daylight and meaningful views is one of the most impactful decisions for both daily experience and educational outcomes. Research consistently shows that access to daylight improves mental acuity, focus, and performance for both students and staff.

From an architectural standpoint, thoughtful use of glazing, skylights, and framed views also elevates the overall experience for users and visitors alike—creating spaces that feel joyful, healthy, and connected to their surroundings.

Q *Mass timber is gaining traction in schools—what do you see as the most significant opportunity, and what's a practical reality districts should understand upfront?*

A The most significant opportunity with mass timber is twofold: it offers a more sustainable construction solution while also creating warm, biophilic environments that make school buildings more inviting and pleasant to inhabit.

“Cherishing the values and history that define a school's sense of place is always the right starting point before any design solution.”

“The most successful school environments are designed to foster belonging—where safety, warmth, and well-being work together, not in opposition.”



At the same time, there are practical realities districts should understand early—particularly around structural spacing and building code requirements. Over the past five years, we’ve developed a clear understanding of how to implement mass timber in the PreK-12 market successfully. As demonstrated in recent projects such as hayu alqi uyxat, Mercer Middle School, and Evergreen High School, thoughtful coordination of structural systems, acoustics, and fire and life-safety strategies can yield truly exceptional results.

Q *How do you help districts balance safety and security with warm, welcoming environments that support belonging and well-being?*

A These goals are not mutually exclusive. Many of the districts we work with recognize that trauma-informed design principles—such as transparency, areas of refuge, personalization, and the creation of places of belonging—naturally reinforce feelings of safety and security.

From a practical standpoint, openness and transparency can be paired with well-designed controlled entry points, access control, and discreet security measures. The most successful projects integrate these systems seamlessly into the overall design, rather than allowing security features to dominate the user experience.

Q *What’s the most underrated space on a campus?*

A Hallways and corridors. These aren’t just circulation routes—everyone uses them throughout the day. When thoughtfully designed, they become active, engaging spaces that support connection and learning rather than simply moving students from one class to the next.

Q *Best part of a site walk?*

A Discovering moments that are unique to a school—student-painted murals, mosaic tiles created over decades, or other artifacts that reflect shared history. These details help define a school’s identity and sense of place.

Q *Give me one word that every school project should prioritize?*

A Belonging. ●

Why Students Thrive in CTE:

Engagement, Confidence, and Real-World Learning

After more than three decades working with school districts across California, I have walked through—and helped design—hundreds of classrooms. Education has evolved in many ways during that time, but few changes have been as powerful or as encouraging as the growth of career and technical education (CTE). When done well, CTE transforms how students experience school. It turns passive learners into active participants, builds confidence and motivation, and helps students rediscover pride in their work. Most importantly, it allows many students to fall in love with learning again.

A major driver of this transformation has been the rise of industry partnerships. Many early CTE programs began as grassroots efforts, often led by a single dedicated teacher or a district seeking to improve enrollment and engagement. At first, these programs might have consisted of a single computer lab or repurposed classroom. Once authentic industry connections were formed, however, everything changed. Students could see why they were learning particular skills and how those skills translated directly to real careers.

Strong CTE programs, I have learned, are not simply about job training. They are about relevance, engagement, and providing students with a clear sense of purpose.

LEARNING THAT FEELS MEANINGFUL

Many traditional classrooms still rely heavily on lectures, worksheets, and standardized assignments.

For some students, this approach is practical. For many others, it is not.

I have heard countless students ask, implicitly or explicitly, “Why am I learning this?” When coursework feels abstract or disconnected from daily life, motivation can quickly erode. CTE fundamentally changes that dynamic.

In contemporary CTE classrooms, students edit videos, diagnose engines, prepare meals, construct buildings, secure networks, and operate production studios. They solve real problems using professional tools. In these environments, the relevance of learning is immediately apparent.

That sense of purpose makes a measurable difference. District partners consistently report higher engagement, improved attendance, and increased student participation in CTE pathways. As relevance rises, so does confidence.

FROM OBSERVERS TO CREATORS

One of CTE’s most powerful attributes is its ability to shift students from observers to creators. Rather than passively receiving information, students apply it. Instead of memorizing concepts, they put them to work. Collaboration replaces isolation.

CTE classrooms are active, dynamic environments. Students move between workstations, exchange ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and refine their work. There is no “back row” where students can disengage unnoticed.

By **Steve Wilkerson** AIA
Principal-in-Charge



With more than thirty years of experience, **Steve Wilkerson** has delivered a broad portfolio of education, civic, and private projects and is widely recognized as a collaborative, hands-on leader. His work spans master planning, new construction, and modernization. Steve’s expertise in security design has enabled him to integrate effective protective strategies into architectural concepts for many California school districts.

Instructors function as coaches and mentors, circulating through the space to support individuals and small groups. Learning becomes personal and responsive. Over time, even students who were once reluctant to speak or present often begin to take on leadership roles. Many develop confidence as communicators and collaborators. CTE creates the conditions for these transformations to occur.

DESIGNING SPACES WITH INSPIRATION BUILT IN

The physical environment plays a critical role in CTE success. These spaces are fundamentally different from traditional classrooms. They must feel industry standard, accommodate specialized equipment, and support significantly greater power and infrastructure demands.

Well-designed CTE facilities communicate their purpose immediately. When students enter these environments, they sense that the work happening there matters. The spaces feel serious, professional, and authentic—places where honest work is expected and respected. That message alone can elevate motivation and engagement.

SAN JACINTO AND THE POWER OF MEDIA

One project that continues to resonate with me is the video production studio designed for the San Jacinto Unified School District. Though modest in budget, the project’s impact has been substantial.

The district sought to create a space where students could learn broadcasting, production, and media communication using professional tools.

The result was [Tiger Media Network \(TMN\)](#), a fully operational broadcast studio serving both the school and the broader community. Students produce daily broadcasts and manage every aspect of production, from camera operation and lighting to sound, editing, and on-air presentation.

At a ribbon-cutting held after the studio had been in use, a quiet student approached me and said, “Thank you. I didn’t know I had these opportunities before.” That moment captured the essence of CTE.

At San Jacinto, students do not merely study media—they become media professionals. Their work is shared publicly, fostering pride, ownership, and accountability. Many arrive early, stay late, and treat the studio as their own. That level of engagement is rare in traditional classroom settings.

SANTA ANA AND INDUSTRY-DRIVEN PATHWAYS

In the Santa Ana Unified School District, recent designs for four major CTE projects demonstrate the power of community-driven and industry-informed development. These programs emerged organically, shaped by dedicated educators, engaged students, and strong local industries.

Culinary and Hospitality. What began in cramped, improvised spaces evolved into a robust program supported by growing enrollment and industry partnerships. Purpose-built facilities now provide commercial teaching kitchens and instructional areas that mirror professional hospitality environments, strengthening realism and motivation.

Automotive Technology. Long a community resource, Santa Ana’s automotive program required modernization to meet contemporary demands. New facilities incorporate digital diagnostics, advanced electronics, and electric-vehicle infrastructure, ensuring students train on equipment aligned with today’s industry standards.

Digital Media Arts. Rapid growth outpaced the original lab space, prompting the creation of a proper studio environment designed for instruction and industry collaboration. Features such as a large roll-up door allow professionals to work alongside students. The space can also be rented during non-school hours, generating potential revenue for the district.



“Creating a professional-level studio for students to create and publish authentic content is vital if we truly want to prepare students for their next steps.”

PHOTO BY DAVID FENNEMA



Canyon Springs High School, Moreno Valley, California

One instructor noted that a former student now earns more through a YouTube channel developed from class projects than she does as a teacher—a powerful example of entrepreneurial potential and independence fostered through CTE.

Building Construction Trades. Closely tied to Santa Ana’s local economy, this pathway benefits from active involvement by contractors, business owners, local trade unions, and alumni. Students work on real projects, gaining credibility, confidence, and a tangible connection to their community.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND BELONGING IN MORENO VALLEY

The most profound impact of CTE is personal. Students who feel invisible in traditional academic settings often find a sense of belonging in CTE programs.

At Canyon Springs High School in the Moreno Valley Unified School District, a cyber innovation center opened in 2022 within repurposed shop spaces.

The program addresses demand in cybersecurity and gaming while developing skills in programming, logistics, critical thinking, and teamwork—fields with tens of thousands of job openings statewide and beyond.

Students formed cohesive teams, wore uniforms, and gained campus-wide recognition. Faculty leadership and industry connections were essential to the program’s success, reinforcing professional identity and pride. Similar dynamics emerged at Tiger Media Network and other CTE initiatives.

LOOKING FORWARD

Career and technical education is not a substitute for academic learning; it is an expansion of it. Some students pursue four-year degrees, others community college, certifications, apprenticeships, or direct employment. Many become entrepreneurs. All gain practical skills, professional habits, and self-belief.

As educators, designers, and community partners, we share responsibility for preparing students for an increasingly complex future. Well-designed, well-supported CTE programs—rooted in genuine industry partnerships—enable students to meet that future with confidence. They show up, participate, take pride in their work, and rediscover the joy of learning. That is an outcome worth continued investment. ●

Building Futures:

Why Middle School Is the New Front Line for Career and Technical Education

By Bridget Flecky AIA

Principal-in-Charge



Bridget partners with school districts to plan and deliver adaptable PreK–12 facilities that support student achievement, protect public investment, and respond to evolving community needs.

With a more hands-on learning experience for all students and a post-graduation pathway, career and technical education (CTE) programs—such as gaming, culinary arts, automotive technologies, and others—are attracting significant interest, and schools are expanding their programs to better address the needs of their students and communities. The popularity of CTE programs at the high school level has steadily increased over the years, and we are now seeing a similar rise at the middle school level.

INSPIRING STUDENTS EARLIER

CTE programs focus on problem-solving, mimic real-world work environments, and offer more engagement than a traditional classroom. This benefits students across all their classes. Grades six through eight are an ideal time to introduce students to a more technical education. At this instructional level, these programs can spark interest and provide students with a low-stakes introduction to new trades, skills, and industries.

Middle school is a vital time in a child’s development. At this age, students begin to transition from young children into young adulthood, becoming more independent and discovering or leaning into their passions. Exposing younger students to a wide variety of careers and skills will help them explore their passions and begin to form the first traces of occupational identities.

AT AVIARA OAKS MIDDLE SCHOOL: INSTILLING SKILLS THAT TRANSLATE

Despite the word “career” in its name, the skills students learn in CTE programs go beyond just career advancement. Programs like the architecture and construction lab at Carlsbad Unified School District’s Aviara Oaks Middle School give students a space to practice skills they’ll use throughout their lives. Students learn how to operate power tools, read plans, and properly measure to create their own projects—students have built Adirondack chairs and even tiny houses. This gives them the confidence to pursue a career in construction or make their own home repairs. Previously, the school had a wood shop that spilled onto its exterior pathways, and there was a need to provide an enclosed patio just for the wood shop. A new classroom building, designed with this construction program in mind, offers a secure patio for protecting projects in progress and allows work and learning to transition from indoors to outdoors.

These CTE spaces introduce new skills and provide real-life illustrations of the themes students learn in their daily classes. The skills students learn in CTE programs translate to all classes. What a student learns in woodshop can help them see their math homework more clearly, or what they learn in science class can help them create a tasty recipe in culinary class.

As new technology and industries emerge, schools need to be flexible in the programs they offer.

PHOTO BY DAVID FENNEMA



EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS AT WOODLAND PARK MS

At Woodland Park Middle School in the San Marcos Unified School District, there are multiple CTE-focused educational spaces, including a futures lab that allows students to explore a variety of potential career paths, such as cosmetology, audiovisual, and healthcare. While designing their newest classroom building, the HMC design team understood that the CTE programs would need spaces that could adapt to a range of future technologies and educational needs.

In addition to the futures lab, our preliminary designs included robotics labs, gaming centers, and other unique programs to support varying interests and academic objectives. The school also hopes to introduce a culinary program and teaching kitchens where students can gain valuable experience in a professional culinary kitchen while learning nutrition and crucial life skills. This would require more water stations and plumbing reorganization, but by designing with flexibility in mind, this space could serve current and future CTE programs and learning modalities.

ADAPTABLE CTE INFRASTRUCTURE

Two of our most significant infrastructure challenges when designing CTE spaces are access to power and data. Is there enough, and is it placed in the proper locations? So, depending on the program, we consider where and how much power to include in a space. As most districts evolve their programs, their furniture and final fixtures are growing as well. We include more mobile equipment and rely less on built-in furniture and permanent fixtures, enabling the programs to adapt quickly without altering the building’s architecture. If you’re designing one space that can support a complex program, it’s likely to lend itself to another complex program.

REAL-WORLD, ADVANCED LEARNING IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

CTE at the middle school level is on the rise due to the increased engagement it provides students, the foundational skills it fosters, including both soft and hard skills, and the improved outcomes seen when providing early exposure to technical education, including increased graduation rates. At the middle school level, these programs are generally exploratory, allowing students exposure without undue pressure, and supporting future specialization at the high school and college levels. Designing for these programs requires a thoughtful, intentional, and flexible approach. When students are given the proper spaces, designed to support both their needs and the overall learning experience, they thrive and succeed. These are not play-sized spaces with basic technologies; they are real-world, advanced learning environments that give students a proper introduction to new skills and job training. These middle school spaces may be the first step on a student’s journey to becoming a future industry leader, opening a new world, or inspiring a new passion. ●

Elevating Our Skills for Your Success

Newly Licensed Architects



Deepa Joshi, AIA
Project Manager Deepa Joshi has been reinstated as a licensed architect in the state of California.



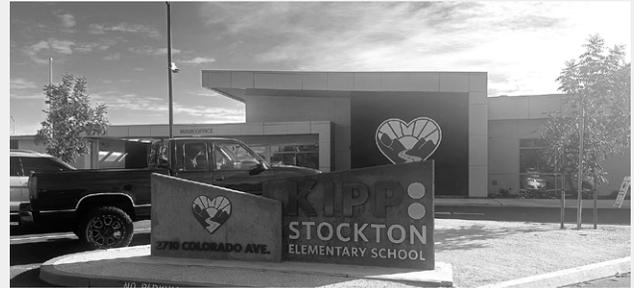
Francisco Perez, AIA
Project Coordinator Francisco Perez has earned licensure as an architect.



Defining Moments



New Administration and Kindergarten Building Dedicated at Anna Kyle Elementary School
Fairfield, California



KIPP Charter Schools Dedicates New Stockton Elementary School
Stockton, California



Grant Union High School Celebrates Renovation of Historic Auditorium
Sacramento, California



Roseville City School District Hosts Shear Wall-Signing Ceremony at Winding Creek Elementary School
Roseville, California



Bassetti Architects, a Design Studio of HMC Architects, Hosts Sustainable Building Week
Portland, Oregon



Floyd Farms Featured in CalBEM Case Studies of All-Electric Schools
Sacramento, California



Mercer International Middle School Celebrates Ribbon Cutting
Seattle, Washington



Manteca Unified School District Celebrates Campus Transformation at East Union High School
Manteca, California

Design Honors



PHOTO BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER



Benson Polytechnic High School — 2025 DeMuro Award for Historic Preservation



PHOTO BY ALEX NYE

El Rodeo Elementary School — 2025 AIA Central Valley Design Award, Award of Merit



San Benito High School — 2025 AIA Central Valley Design Award, Citation Award



PHOTO BY DAVID FENNEIMA

The Food Literacy Center at Floyd Farms — 2025 AIA Central Valley Design Award, Citation Award

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