



FIVE WAYS TO BUILD A MODEL FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

By Rechel Anderson

JASPER COUNTY SCHOOLS USES MODERN SEATING, VIBRANT COLOR SCHEMES, AND MOBILE furniture to create an engaging, productive learning environment that students love.

A career and technology education (CTE) center lingered near the top of Jasper County's to-do list for years. But it wasn't until 2020 that all of the ideas

came together to develop a brand-new facility for students.

To build the state-of-the-art Jasper County School District Career and Advanced Technology Education (CATE) Center facility from scratch was a daunting endeavor that requires consistent planning, stakeholder support, commu-

nity involvement (from parents, teachers and members of the community), and good design.

A quality CATE facility should meet educational goals.

Jasper County carefully selected builders that had positive reputations and that could stay within budget while offering a quality product. The same care was taken when selecting MiEN Company as a furniture partner, knowing that they would stay within budget while meeting the district's broader vision.

Consider five more steps Jasper took to ensure that the new facility would serve as a model for continuous learning:

1. Involve key stakeholders.

Make sure the individuals at the table during the planning stages truly have a voice in the process. This isn't something that can be accomplished with one decision-maker and a group that goes along with the process. Get your teachers, parents, community members, board members and other stakeholders involved right in the beginning.

2. Choose quality partners.

Jasper County leaned heavily on partners like MiEN, which came in and not only matched the district's needs with quality, modern furniture, but also stayed within budget and lent their expertise through the entire project. They listened and learned our challenges, and then they helped select the very best options for Jasper County's

specific needs — from the furniture to the materials to the color schemes.

3. Create a "wow" factor.

For our new CATE facility, Jasper County selected comfortable, collaborative furniture that was moveable, built on coasters. Chairs, tables, shelving, charging stations, and other elements that converge to create an inviting, engaging environment for students as they prepare for their future careers were also mixed into the design. The goal was to inspire innovation. We wanted individuals to walk in and be wowed.

4. Build collaboration into your process.

Monumental undertakings like this one require good collaboration from end to end. For it to work, everyone has to adhere to the intended vision. They must understand that vision, ask probing questions, and then help one another understand why certain steps are being taken. Through good collaboration, a state-of-the-art facility was developed that everyone can be proud of. Most importantly, it supports students to thrive.

5. Keep partners accountable.

Select partners who will remain accountable, and who stand behind the quality of the product. Throughout the construction and design of our CATE facility, Jasper County's community partners answered all of our questions and supported the district through the

whole process. That level of accountability contributed to the overall success of the project.

Today, our new CATE facility serves as a model for continuous learning and is a cornerstone for high school students who are interested in career exploration. While it certainly can be overwhelming to build a state-of-the-art facility from the ground up, anything is possible with the right vision, partners and planning. ■

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MIEN



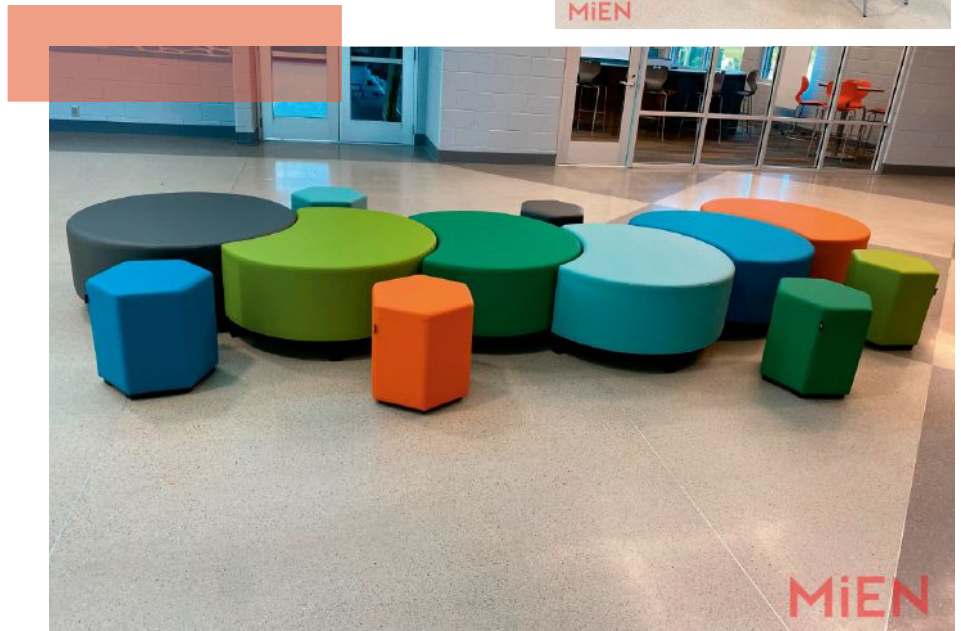
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