



Voc-tech Isn't What It Used To Be

GATEWAY PUBLIC SPACES WELCOME THE COMMUNITY AT NEW DOVER HIGH SCHOOL

by TINA STANISLASKI

MOST OF US RECALL the stigma of the vocational, or voc-tech, school. For generations, these career and trade education schools were seen as places for underperforming students considered unprepared for a mainstream, college-focused academic program. They were separate, often invisible places.

Fortunately, the old stigma is giving way to new thinking. For starters, voc-tech is now Career Technical Education (CTE). Second, the hands-on, practical skill building CTE schools provide is valued as an experience benefitting all students in an economy that rewards critical thinking, problem solving, and STEM and STEAM proficiency.

Rather than divide the building into two separate wings for academic and CTE

students, the design blends classroom, laboratory sciences and career tech learning spaces together into a layout that brings students from both programs together as a single learning community.

Town Square Space — Heart and Soul of a Civic Experience

Inside the front entrance are several public and community spaces with functions that celebrate the community mission of the combined schools and welcome the public as participants. The entrance leads visitors into the front-side public spaces and to a “Town Square” where visitors can dine at the student-run restaurant, receive cosmetology services, get a haircut, have their blood pressure checked, attend a health and wellness class, see a play or watch a basketball game. Glass walls and windows

frame a bright, inviting forum space for displaying artwork, hosting community gatherings and producing cultural events.

“The new Dover High School is designed to be a community building,” said Principal Peter Driscoll. “We look forward to inviting our citizens of all ages to use the building, both in conjunction with our students and staff, as well as at city-wide events.”

While security concerns are keeping the public out of public schools, the vision in Dover is to invite them in and offer a variety of reasons for people to come, participate, and return. The public spaces are strategically placed within a defined section of the building, a design configuration that allows for a secure separation between public use areas and student-only spaces. The doors between the public space and the academic wing are secured with an ID system and can be locked down by security personnel.

**CAREER AND
TECHNICAL EDUCATION**



Integrating the best of both CTE and academic schools is the central idea behind the design of the new Dover High School in the City of Dover, N.H. The school will bring together the formerly separate regional Career Technical School and the city's academic high school to create a 1500-student combined school scheduled to open in the Fall of 2018. The white brick, two-story entrance welcomes the community.

Community Benefits Combine with Educational Benefits

One of the Career Tech programs certain to draw public interest is the culinary kitchen. Students will prepare and serve meals from an ever-changing seasonal menu, and guests in the adjacent dining room will be able to watch the action in the display kitchen. The 50-seat dining room and kitchen are next to an 850-seat auditorium. A table-service dinner and a live theater or music performances will be one of many reasons for Dover residents to come to the school.

Other destination activities will include

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personal care services provided by students in the cosmetology program, health and wellness education offered by the school's nursing and health sciences students, and social media help for small businesses from Dover High School's marketing students.

Community events and civic services — arts and culture, education, fitness, science and technology fairs, taxpayer and homeowner advice forums — can be hosted in the forum thanks to a flexible design allowing a variety of room set-ups and audio-visual requirements.

Outdoor Connections Extend Options

The design for both the public spaces and the two academic wings open on to outdoor spaces including a large courtyard complete with a stage and tiered seating. This flexible central space between the academic wings can host a variety of uses, from theater performances and movies to yoga and fitness programs.

Students will use outdoor classrooms to extend their project activities, particularly

beneficial for large-scale building technology, engineering, art and science classes.

Seeing, Experiencing and Learning from Each Other

Combining academic and career technology learning into a single integrated school offers students shared educational engagement and choices across many disciplines. The strategic concept is that access to traditional academics will strengthen the learning experience of career/technical students while the hands-on and project-based activities of the career and technical spaces will strengthen the learning experience of academic-based students.

Among other outcomes, this integration is designed to break down the longstanding vocational school stereotype and spark creativity and excitement throughout the school community.

>> Tina Stanislaski AIA, LEED-AP is a senior associate with HMFH Architects in Cambridge, Mass. and project manager for Dover High School.