Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers (TCALC)
The design for the renovations and additions focuses on transforming the existing facility’s image into a professional work and learning environment with highly interactive, creative, and technology-laden spaces. The renovated space provides new classroom, lab, research, and collaboration venues that reflect those found in high-end workplace facilities. The program relies on strong partnerships with business, industry, and post-secondary institutions. Students engage in real project work for real businesses, while receiving high school and college credit. Strands of study include Engineering/Advanced Manufacturing, Energy/Environment, Bioscience/Biomedical, Business, Health/Human Services, Teaching, and Design Thinking/Innovation.

Executive Summary

Topeka Public Schools, with intent to support an innovative program in profession-based learning, sought to re-purpose the former Capital City High School, to house the Topeka Center for Advanced Learning & Careers.
OWNER: TOPEKA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 501
LOCATION: TOPEKA, KAN.
OCCUPANCY DATE: AUGUST 2018
GRADES: 10-12
STUDENT CAPACITY: 300 STUDENTS
BUILDING AREA: 71,200 SF
CONSTRUCTION COST: $10,940,000

The scope of work for this project encompasses improvements to approximately 71,200 SF of space in a repurposed high school facility. This includes facility master planning, interior demolition, construction, new finishes, and new furnishings and fixtures throughout. The new facade features a rich material palate that emphasizes a layering of metal panels over existing and new brick with new larger sections of glazing to provide ample daylight into the building interior.
Over 50 representatives from the Topeka business community participated in the programing and planning process to ensure that the programs offered at TCALC reflect the needs of local industries.

Through a series of visioning sessions these individuals collaborated in teams to develop the necessary building spaces and adjacencies that reflect a realistic working environment to foster the project-based learning curriculum offered at the center. These same representatives continue to be used as resources and mentors for the programs by providing training through instruction, internships and externships. The career pathways including Robotics and Engineering, Education, Health and Human Services, Bioscience, Business and Design Thinking are designed to support and build interest in the current and future workplace needs in and around Topeka.

Engagement activities included:
- Career Trends + Pathway Opportunities
- Visual Listening Exercise
- Innovative Work Environments
- Large and Small Group Discussions

What is your vision for TCALC?
Word cloud describing desires for TCALC program and facility. (Synthesized from all 57 submissions)
This program provides students with the opportunities to deeply explore professions of high interest through profession-based, inquiry-based, and project-based curriculum as a junior and/or senior.

**Students are provided authentic exposure and skill acquisition in high-demand, high-skill 21st century professions.**
TCALC is about students solving real-world problems with real tools, used by real professionals, being mentored by real employers, leading to real contributions in the professional area.
The existing facility was originally part of the Kansas State Hospital system built in the early 1960’s. Designed to serve as a clinical and research center for mental sciences, the exiting building was nondescript and underwhelming in character. The nature of the operations prohibited the use of windows and as a result provided limited access to daylight. In 1981 the facility was converted to and education and activity center for the Topeka School District with a major addition which provided additional classrooms along with to larger volumes to house gymnasium and library. The new addition incorporated one narrow window per classroom with masonry walls that provided minimal thermal comfort typical of design and construction techniques at the time.
TCALC has provided opportunities to engage with different employers within the Topeka community to forge partnerships that allow for new education programs to be developed. **Allowing TCALC to be an integral part of meeting the workforce needs of the Topeka Community.**

As an example a partnership was developed with the Topeka Police Department to begin a police training program. This allows TPD to gain interest at younger ages and recruit a more diversified police force in the future while building strong community relationship with Topeka youth. This was made possible with the TCALC facility.
The design goals and challenges included:

1. Providing additional daylight to all spaces and allow light to penetrate deep into the building.
2. Maximize the use of the existing larger volumes to support the programmatic elements.
3. Transform the building image to reinforce the mission of “professional learning environment”.

Physical Environment
Results of the Process & Project

Topeka Public Schools maintains, at all levels, a focus on college and career readiness. At TCALC, students have more time, aided by state-of-the-art equipment and teachers with industry experience, to focus on their pathway-related projects to ensure they have a post-secondary education plan in place prior to graduating high school. These pathways and programs also allow for students to earn college credit or industry recognized credentials while in high school. Middle school students participating in the College Prep Academy are earning high school credit advancing their opportunities while in high school.

The Topeka community currently has a large focus on Momentum 2022, which includes workforce development aimed to Community partner leverage. TCALC has allowed for a broader base of community partnerships to be developed to explore, investigate, and ultimately create programing that meets the needs of the Topeka community when it comes to education needs.

Topeka Public Schools has an extremely diverse student population that is a strength and benefit to the community as a whole.
Results of the Process & Project

The design thinking lab provides flexibility for different learning modalities based on student needs and tasks. It also allows users to reconfigure the space for multiple teaming configurations.
Results of the Process & Project

The maker space has a variety of furniture on casters allowing the space to be rearranged easily to accommodate a variety of learning activities.
Results of the Process & Project

Advanced science and bio-medical pathways allow students early exposure to work toward a professional degree in the science industry.
Results of the Process & Project

Collaboration areas are introduced throughout the building to facilitate teaming, individual learning and reflection. The student-centered design includes built-in nooks for reading and relaxing.
Results of the Process & Project

The existing gymnasium was transformed into the social commons that incorporates a learning stair and provides space for larger group presentations with breakout rooms on the upper level that offer acoustical privacy for small groups. Daylight is introduced through clerestories.
Results of the Process & Project

The existing library was converted into a large format presentation space which allows students the opportunity to present to community business partners.
The Topeka Center for Advanced Learning and Careers (TCALC) is an innovative site that truly captures our mission to engage, prepare and inspire scholars and staff in being innovative in their approach to education. The design of the facility is a demonstration of what thinking outside the box truly looks like. TCALC has led to increased community partnerships and currently discussions on partnering to move business incubators within the site is underway. Having an engaging place to learn in is an important part of the learning process for students. Our scholars have truly flourished in new ways through the many new courses and business partnerships offered through TCALC.

Dr. Tiffany Anderson, Superintendent
Topeka Public Schools