

Case Study

Worcester Technical High School

One of the United States' first vocational high schools, Worcester Technical High School is today's state-of-the-art successor to Worcester Trade School for boys (1908) and David Hall Fanning Trade School for girls (1921). Now part of the Worcester Public School system, the newly constructed Worcester Technical High School was opened in 2006. Its mission is to educate and prepare students, both academically and technically, to meet the challenges of a global society in the 21st century.



Worcester Technical High School

Location Worcester, Massachusetts

Number of People Served 1,600 high school students; 3,000 evening community ed students

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Dealer Contact Information Steve Corridori / W.B. Mason / 888-WB-MASON or 888-926-2766

The need

At Worcester Technical High School, 70 percent of the graduates go on to pursue additional education, including four-year schools. That's an astounding, above-average success rate – and a far cry from the outdated image of vocational schools of past generations. Today's technical high school student needs training for advanced work in traditional fields like automotive repair, culinary arts and carpentry as well as new career paths in telecommunications, biotechnology and engineering. To equip Worcester Technical High School with the tools needed by students in a high-tech, highly competitive job market, visionary school leaders and advisors thought different and aimed high. They enlisted WTHS in the Worcester Education Partnership, a school reform program funded through Carnegie's Foundation's Schools for a New Society Initiative. They challenged architects to design a state-of-the-art facility. They created Entrustments, a partnership program with businesses, manufacturers and major suppliers like Cisco, Dell, HP, Intel, General Motors, Toyota, Océ Copiers and more. In exchange for equipment, expertise and knowledge, these partners installed their products and services in an exclusive arrangement with this unique high school and community learning center. Through Entrustments, WTHS raised \$30 million to add to the city's \$60 million investment, reaching the \$90 million need to turn this school into an inspiring educational center for the whole community. It now proudly features four specialized academies of learning, an automotive repair shop, Skyline Bistro Restaurant, Worcester Credit Union, retail stores, a bakery and coffee shop and a performance auditorium open to the public.

The izzy+ solution

Cool ideas also attract cool, affordable furniture maker izzydesign, whose employees are eager to help incredibly talented students and adults learn in an A+ environment. With the help of Ritz Associates and W.B. Mason, Worcester Technical High School's Peter Crafts and Sandy Borbone selected and ordered the facility's classroom, conference area and student café furniture and seating from izzydesign. Colorful Hannah chairs and round Rylee tables playfully encircle the student's atrium lunchroom. Freestanding Clara 100 tables give instructors plenty of computer and consultation space. Rectangular Rylee tables with customized color edges and front modesty panels serve students during the day – and easily hold lightweight Hannah chairs stacked on top when it's time to log off. On a clear day, you can see Boston's Prudential Tower from the vantage point of the school's upper floor conference room for staff, business and community meetings. Equipped with rich-colored veneer conference tables on casters (re-arrangeable at a moment's notice), meetings are now brought to order in a class of their own. And so comfortable – especially with izzy's award-winning HÅG Conventio wing “rocking” chairs, ready to handle a simple or complex agenda. With growing enrollment in both student and adult classes, the strength and versatility of izzy's products, as well as their enduring design, is key for WTHS. The learning experience is a long-term commitment on both sides of the desk, as izzy plans to present findings of izzylearning in annual educational design conferences hosted at the high school's public auditorium.

Peter Crafts—Director of Vocational Education, Worcester Technical High School

“We met with WB Mason and explained what we were doing. We didn't know what it would look like, but we didn't want it to look like a traditional school or a college. No tablet arm chairs – that is so yesterday. We wanted tables and chairs that people could sit in like human beings, whether they are teenagers or adults in community ed classes... something that wouldn't age in style or color for the next 20 to 30 years. We were building digital classrooms, creating it on the fly – no one knew what that meant. We needed furniture that would be totally accessible to any kind of technology as it evolved. We wanted tables that could be used by two people, and reconfigured for group or team collaboration. WB Mason introduced us to Ritz Associates and then Chuck Saylor of izzydesign. His vision was similar to ours. We consummated the deal that was written on a napkin. Educators, business people, manufacturers and industrial icons all circled together. They all put their positive forces to bear to make this project work. It's very exciting. And the results are paying off. It's incredible what young people can do if you give them half a chance. If you give them the opportunity, it's amazing the level of learning they can attain. This facility allows people to do what they are capable of doing. The more technology we can put in here, the better it is for the kids. I love my job. I just love coming to work now.”

Sandy Borbone—Administrative Coordinator, Worcester Technical High School

“From purchasing and facility rental to helping faculty figure out their software programs, I handle sales, marketing and administration – I’m the go-to person. Building a new school was a lot of hard work, but I’m very proud of this place. The old school was old; it was built in the 1950s. They had no grass, just pavement. The students had to cross a four-lane street to go from the automotive school to lunch, and they had to walk half a mile for outside sports. There was no auditorium. The cafeteria was in the basement. So everyone was quite excited about plans for the new school. I remember when the furniture bid went out. I liked the izzy furniture, especially the soft edges on the tables, because that would be so nice for people using computers. We wanted a desk that could seat two students, and that could be used by teenagers and adults (for night courses). We wanted a chair with no arms that’s easy to sit in all day long, whether you’re a large man or skinny girl. We wanted something different, not the traditional classroom tablet-arm chair. We wanted it to look like a college, not a high school – a place that would be comfortable for the public to use. What I really like about it is that you can rearrange the furniture anyway you want to. Everything is lightweight. The tables in the upstairs conference room are on casters, so we can easily turn them around or move them to the side of the room to accommodate a presentation, small work areas and even a luncheon meeting. Teachers are so proud of their classrooms that they are even cleaning the furniture now.”