

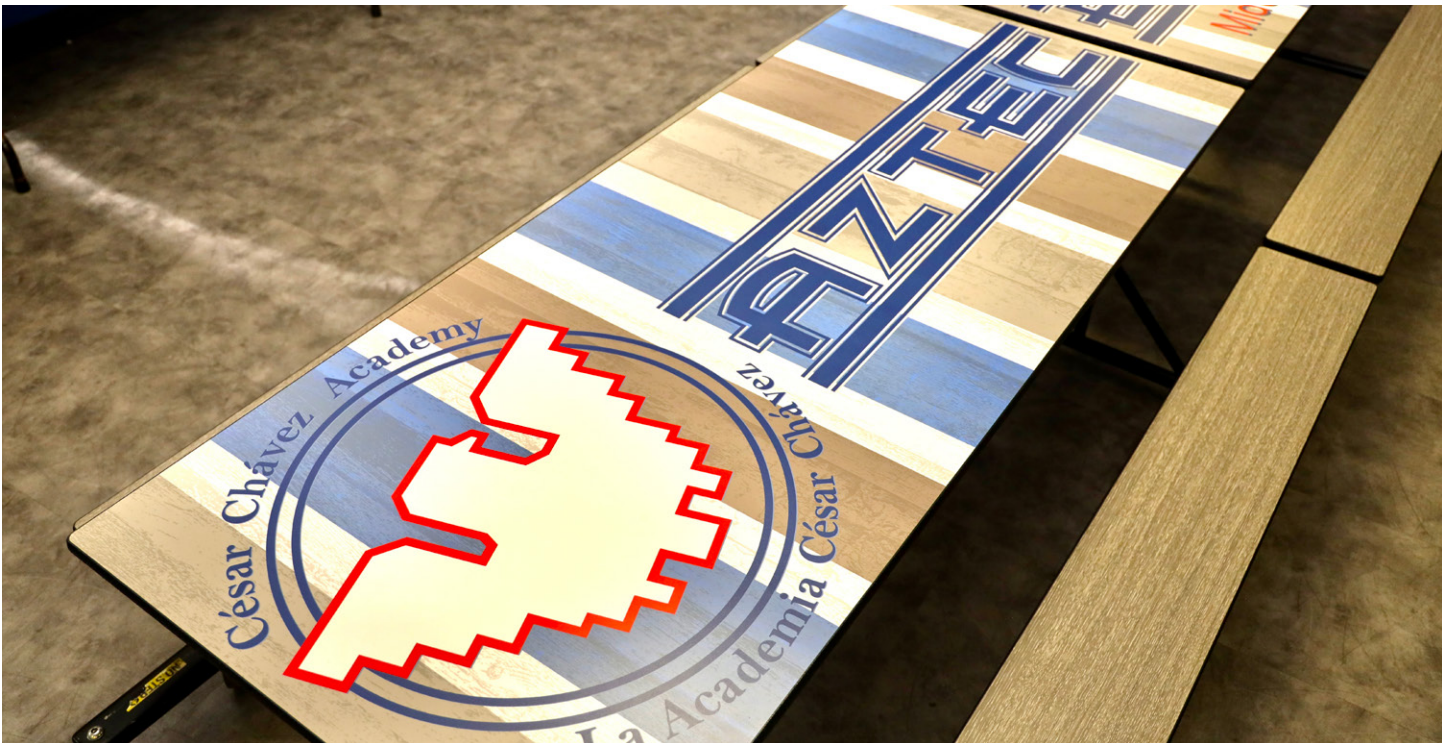
# César Chávez Academy Middle School

CASE STUDY



**CÉSAR CHÁVEZ ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL IS  
POWERING MORE ACTIVE LEARNING**





**“SCHOOL SPECIALTY® WAS REALLY GREAT TO WORK WITH. WE NOW HAVE A LEARNING SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE AND CREATIVE THAN IN A TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM.”**

— CÉSAR CHÁVEZ ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICE MANAGER MANUEL ROSALES

### **CCAMS SUPPORTS STUDENT-LED ACTIVE LEARNING WITH A MODERN MEDIA CENTER**

When [César Chávez Academy Middle School \(CCAMS\)](#) in Detroit built a new media center, officials used this opportunity to create a modern, flexible learning space where students could engage in creativity, collaboration, and other forms of active learning.

CCAMS teamed up with School Specialty and its Projects By Design® team to create a space that would support hands-on, student-centered learning and inquiry — helping to prepare students more effectively for their future.

CCAMS was facing a problem that many K-12 leaders can relate to: The school’s student population had outgrown its facility.

This public charter school of more than 600 students in grades 6-8 has an active waiting list of applicants. However, students are crowded into a building intended to serve far fewer pupils. To alleviate the problem, officials decided to add a new media center that can accommodate up to 70 students at a time.

In planning the space, Principal April Hines-Jenkins, Business Office Manager Manuel Rosales, and other leaders knew they wanted a flexible, modern learning space that would support a wide range of student uses. Their main goal was to support a more active learning style in which students could engage in self-directed learning and inquiry.



“Traditional methods of learning, in which students just sit in their seats and listen to the teacher, aren’t enough to prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s challenges,” Hines-Jenkins says. “Students need to explore and create and collaborate.”

### INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE DESIGN

Effectively supporting more active, student-centered learning begins with the design of the learning space. To kick off the process, CCAMS turned to the stakeholders who would be most directly affected by the project: the students themselves.

“To give students ownership over their learning and make the space feel like theirs, we asked students what they wanted from the media center,” Hines-Jenkins says.



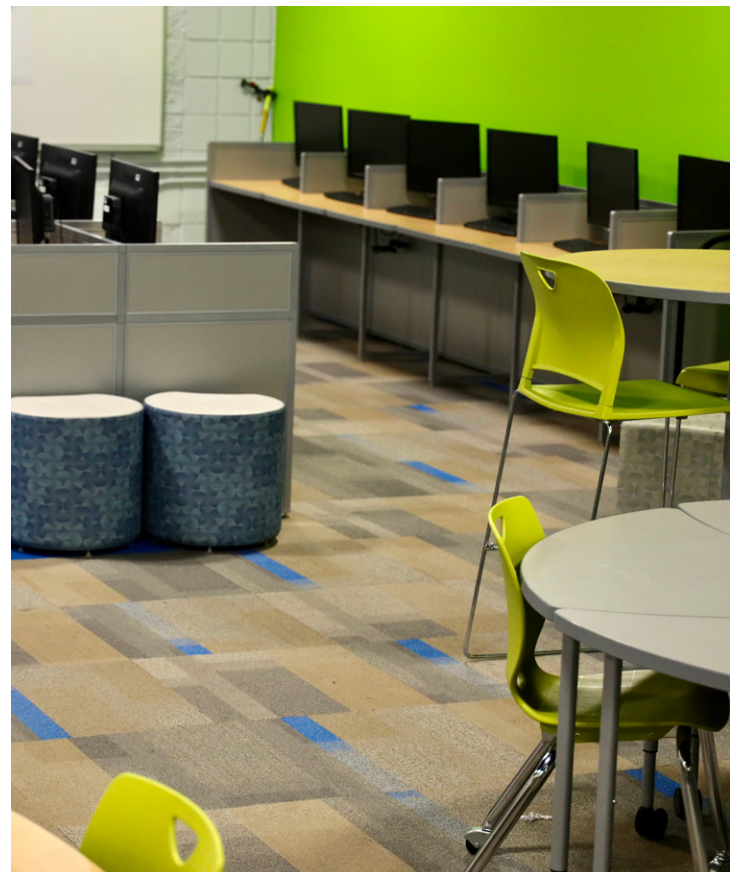




The students told school leaders they wanted to be able to move around the room easily and work comfortably wherever and however they wanted, either independently or in flexible groupings. For instance, students suggested having mobile interactive whiteboards that they could move around the room and use in small groups as needed, instead of having a single board in a fixed location at the front of the room.

Once CCAMS leaders heard from students, they brought these ideas to School Specialty's Projects By Design Team for execution. Strategic Account Representative Kelli Turner worked closely with the school's leadership team and with top-tier partner Interior Concepts to design an ideal floor plan and choose appropriate furniture to equip the media center.

"School Specialty took our ideas and made them work," Hines-Jenkins says. "The space wouldn't have come together without their help."





## POWERING MORE ACTIVE LEARNING

The media center consists of two spaces separated by a mobile dividing wall. On one side are study carrels arranged in rows, where students can work independently or receive extra help. The other side is an active learning space with tables that can be arranged in flexible groups of two, three, four, or five students, as well as café-style seating, soft bench seating, and a horseshoe-shaped table where groups of students can sit for direct instruction.

The tables on the active learning side are on casters so they can easily be moved around and repositioned into whatever configuration will best support students' learning activities.

"It's very flexible," Rosales says of the Classroom Select® furniture, supplied by School Specialty. "Students can take their projects and work together or independently wherever they'd like."

In addition to the mobile interactive whiteboards from Promethean, an iPad cart and a Chromebook cart provide digital devices to support students' learning in the media center. To make sure they can recharge their devices from anywhere in the room, multiple electrical outlets are built into the floor.

"The space is very modern. You don't see this in a lot of city schools," Hines-Jenkins says. "There's also a lot of natural light, with high windows."

The multiuse media center will support collaborative, project-based learning, allowing students to work together comfortably and effectively. Students are excited about the prospect of using the space to facilitate a more active and engaging style of learning that puts them in charge of their own education and prepares them well for 21st century challenges and careers.

"School Specialty was really great to work with," says Rosales, whose professional relationship with Kelli goes back nearly two decades. "We now have a learning space for students to be more comfortable and creative than in a traditional classroom."