

# a recipe for success

MT. HEALTHY CULINARY ARTS CAREER ACADEMY



## the ingredients

In an ever-changing social and economic environment, today's high school students are starving for more relevant learning experiences. They are craving alternative pathways to success that will help them avoid going tens of thousands of dollars into debt and that don't require a 4 year or more commitment. As families struggle to make ends meet, sometimes providing the basics becomes a daily concern. Sadly, not having enough food on the table – much less healthy, balanced, and delicious options – is something many of our youth experience all too often. For these reasons and so many more, the emersion DESIGN team is proud and humbled to be part an amazing project for Mt. Healthy City Schools.

The Culinary Arts Career Academy at Mt. Healthy High School provides a pathway to potentially change the lives of the learners who pass through its doors. Here, students have a safe and enjoyable place to cultivate testing, risk-taking, and resiliency skills as they experience the challenges and successes of a career in the culinary and service industries. This hands-on learning environment provides unique and relevant training that can make an immediate impact. Students are equipped with skills that can not only change the trajectory of their future, but that can literally transform the health and well-being of their families.

Cooking is a universal language that exposes us to different customs, cultures, and ethnicities, by bridging divides in an otherwise polarized nation. By learning world cuisines and cooking techniques, the Culinary Arts Academy has the ability to broaden the horizons of students who likely have no exposure beyond their own neighborhoods.

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## the recipe

The long-term goal of the culinary program at Mt. Healthy is to give students a real life experience and the opportunity to learn in a modern, updated, and professional kitchen space. Two distinct groups of students take advantage of the program, each with different goals. There are those who desire to learn how to cook for themselves and their families, and those whose passion lies in cooking and/or baking as a career.

Students who want to cook for themselves not only gain the necessary skills, but also the confidence to prepare healthy meals on their own. Being exposed to a professional kitchen environment may spark their interest to pursue a career in the culinary or hospitality field.

Mt. Healthy offers a 4-year culinary or baking / pastry curriculum for students interested in pursuing this career path. This extended course of learning provides an in-depth experience where students gain an advanced skillset and are focused in an area they are passionate about.

During the first and second years, students learn culinary fundamentals, safety and sanitation guidelines, and gain a breadth of knowledge in their chosen pathway. The third year focuses on the particulars of their chosen specialty. At the culmination of the third year, students create a comprehensive plan as a basis for starting their own business. During the fourth year, students continue refining their skills and knowledge in their specialized field. They can embark on a new project or interest, or work in the culinary field as a paid intern with one of the school's culinary partners, or an outside establishment of their choosing.

We believe  
experiential learning  
ignites passion and  
can help students  
discover their  
purpose.



## the final dish

emersion DESIGN (lead architect and interior designer), in partnership with Reitano Design Group (food service design), and Fanning Howey Associates (MEP design), created an addition to the existing Mt. Healthy High School in response to the long-term goals of their culinary arts program. This new 10,500 SF addition pairs a 5,500 SF lab space with a 5,000 SF banquet space for school and community events.

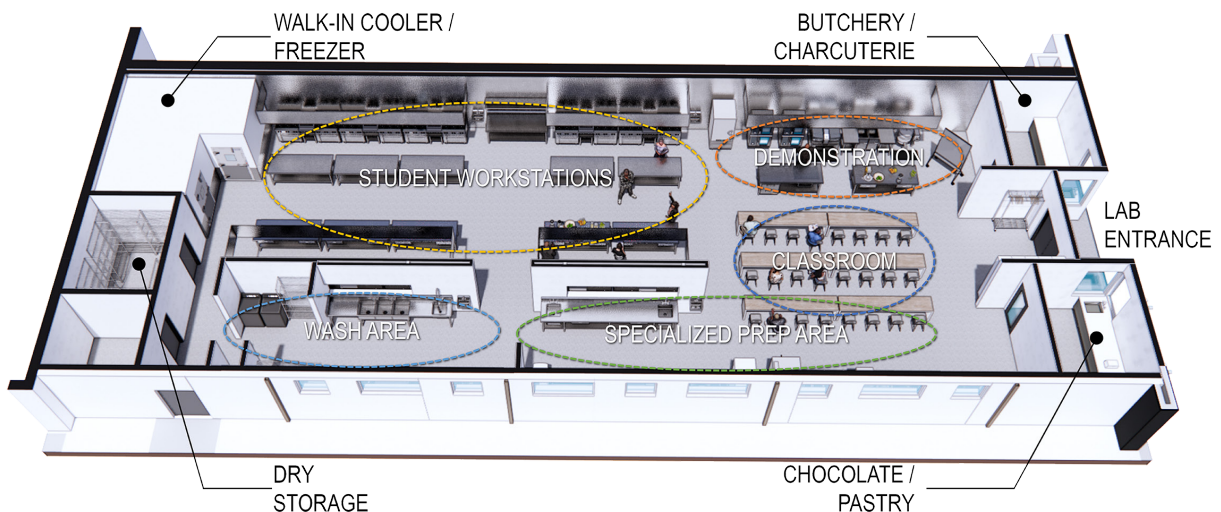


The banquet hall has its own catering area, ensuring efficient service and better support for the school's external community partnerships. Located on the community wing of the building, the banquet space accommodates a wide range of events including district-wide professional development seminars, community meetings, and the school's theater and gymnasium festivities, which are difficult to find space for in the local Mt. Healthy area.

The Culinary Arts Career Academy Lab features an integrated classroom area that allows for flexibility within each curriculum. The lab and infrastructure enables Mt. Healthy and lead instructor, Chef Brian Potter, to teach a wide range of disciplines to students with a broad range of abilities. The curriculum teaches skills in baking, butchery, chocolate, cured meats, smoked meats, vegan and vegetarian, and ethnic cuisine.

The space accommodates 16-20 students and is outfitted with all the equipment necessary for optimal performance. The lab doubles as classroom space, with a designated area for individual desks/workspaces.

The lab is purposefully designed for transparency and public viewing, allowing visitors and other students to witness the students at work, fueling community-wide interest and enthusiasm. To pique visitors' and students' curiosity, the lab has two specialty rooms that are easily visible when entering through the main community event center. Windows looking into a chilled chocolate/pastry and a butchery/charcuterie work area showcases student achievements and successes.



The instructor's work space features an array of commercial foodservice equipment intended to fully prepare students for what they would face after graduation. Multiple mechanical hook-ups allow the equipment to be easily moved as the curriculum dictates. Video monitors deliver live cooking demos or pre-recorded sessions to the broader student group.

In the student area, twenty stations are organized into 4 pods for concentrated learning sessions that occur at varying times. In this setup, all hood systems aren't operating simultaneously, conserving energy when possible. Every student has an individual preparation station and a restaurant-grade range/oven combination, with a charbroiler that is jointly utilized by two students. Smaller, more specialized spaces along the outside wall are designated for advanced group instruction in protein and bakery-related disciplines. This space is equipped with a hearth oven, a sheeter, mixers, and wood-topped bakery tables, as well as larger sinks, stainless steel tables, and meat preparation areas for proper handling of raw proteins.

Rounding out the new space is a walk-in cooler/freezer and a large, dry storage room that meets all the storage needs of the culinary program and event catering operations. The main delivery entrance is located here, as is a commercial grade washer and dryer. A commercial dishwashing area with a conveyor dish machine and a large, three-compartment sink accommodates multiple students for quicker clean-up, maximizing teaching and learning time.

The Culinary Arts Career Academy, inspired by Chef Brian's vision, is a true, world-class facility that will elevate Mt. Healthy City Schools to the top tier of what our team sees in other school systems across the nation.



## about the authors and contributors



### **christie boron**

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With 25 years of experience, Christie is an expert in PK-12 planning and design. She works tirelessly to ensure that students' growth and success is at the heart of every client's building project.

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### **brian potter**

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After decades in the IT business, Brian switched to a career in the culinary arts and has found his true passion. He thrives on teaching students and the community how to make simple, wholesome meals.



### **chris wair**

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Chris brings over 38 years of foodservice industry experience to Reitano Design Group. He has a diversified background as a designer, a kitchen equipment contractor, and as an owner/operator in the restaurant market.