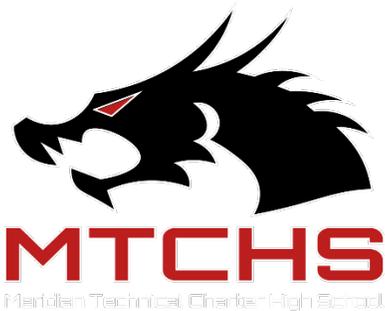


Meridian Technical Charter High School Department Head Summary



PREPARED FOR MTCHS
MAY 2025



Executive Summary

A 12-question form was developed and distributed to the Meridian Technical Charter High School (MTCHS) department heads to learn more about what opportunities and challenges its staff sees now and for the future. Question topics included public perception, program models, infrastructure and facility enhancements and future considerations. Twelve out of sixteen responses were received.

Feedback highlights that MTCHS is widely perceived by its department heads as a great or amazing specialized school that excels at providing a tech-focused education, preparing students for life after high school, and offering valuable real-world experiences through its internship program.

Key strengths highlighted include the small teacher-to-student ratio and class sizes which foster strong relationships and allow for personalized attention. However, the surveys reveal a significant and widespread concern regarding the current facility's size and limitations, which are already impacting program delivery and will be a major challenge for future growth.

The desire for growth to serve more students is present, but there is considerable apprehension that growth could negatively impact the unique aspects of the school, particularly small class sizes, student-teacher relationships, and the overall quality of the educational experience.

Financial considerations, including the potential for operating in the red and making decisions based on money rather than student best interests, were voiced concerns related to expansion.

Future challenges, such as the rapid evolution of technology (especially AI) and changes in student learning styles, necessitate flexible facilities and adaptable programs.

Addressing these challenges proactively will require careful planning regarding space, staffing, curriculum, and financial sustainability while preserving the core strengths that make MTCHS special.

1. Core Strengths & School Identity

- MTCHS is widely perceived as a premier tech-focused institution.
- Key attributes to preserve include:
 - Small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios
 - Hands-on, tech-integrated curriculum
 - Personalized instruction and relationships
 - Strong internship and work-based learning programs
 - Supportive and intentional learning environment

Maintaining these strengths during any expansion will be critical to preserving the school's identity.

2. Facility Challenges & Space Needs

The current building is significantly undersized and outdated for existing and future programming. Identified issues include:

- **Overcrowded classrooms** and tight common spaces (e.g., Haley Hall)

- **Shared and inefficient spaces** for Robotics, Networking, and IT
- **Specialized space needs**, such as:
 - Dedicated robotics lab and field setup area
 - Simulated server room for Cybersecurity/Networking
 - Media production space (video, audio, VR/AR)
 - Modern science lab with lab stations
 - Work-based learning suite with offices, meeting space, and collaborative workspace
 - Flexible classrooms mimicking real-world workspaces
 - General collaboration areas for students
- **Basic infrastructure issues:** inadequate restrooms, plumbing odor near staff lunch area, thin walls causing noise disruption
- Facility feels dated despite current technology installation

Stakeholders emphasize that space constraints already hinder educational delivery and will inhibit future growth unless addressed.

3. Growth Impact & Financial Considerations

Stakeholders acknowledge the potential to serve more students but highlight risks associated with unchecked expansion:

- Loss of small class sizes, personalized relationships, and school culture
- Strain on internships and work-based learning partnerships
- Staffing and structural challenges to maintain quality with more students
- Financial concerns:
 - Risk of operating at a deficit for the first time
 - Pressure to retain students for funding over fit or performance
 - Budget-driven decisions potentially impacting academic rigor and student support

Any growth plan must include robust financial modeling that sustains school values while enabling strategic investment in space and staffing.

4. Program & Curriculum Development

To stay relevant and meet evolving student needs, stakeholders identified several desired program enhancements:

- **New or expanded tech pathways** and elective offerings:
 - Robotics
 - ML/AI courses and AI ethics module
 - Customer service for work-based learning prep
 - Chemistry and applied math (e.g., Linear Algebra, Data Analysis)
- **Curriculum flexibility** to serve diverse student interests and strengths
- **More realistic, hands-on simulations** in Networking/Cybersecurity
- **Support for non-traditional learners** and differentiated instruction
- **Staffing needs:**
 - Additional tech instructors (e.g., 0.5 FTE for IT/Electronics)
 - Support staff for students with learning differences
- **Teacher collaboration time** is currently limited and needs expansion

5. Future Challenges & Strategic Planning

MTCHS must proactively plan for the following challenges:

- Rapid evolution in technology and AI's impact on tech careers
- Student behavioral shifts, including shorter attention spans and varying learning styles
- Increased competition from schools with similar offerings
- Difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff as the school grows

Recommended Strategies:

- Engage industry partners to stay aligned with workforce needs
- Design a flexible facility that allows for rapid programmatic pivots
- Offer structured staff mentorship and ongoing professional development
- Rethink assignments susceptible to AI automation
- Deepen parent/community engagement on educational direction
- Study innovative school models nationally and globally (e.g., West MEC, Cardinal Manufacturing, hybrid/virtual models)
- Promote student wellness and physical activity (e.g., outdoor programs)

Conclusion

MTCHS is highly regarded for its unique blend of rigorous academics and applied technical learning in a close-knit community. However, the current facility and operational model limit its ability to grow and adapt. Expansion should be guided by a facility master plan and financial model that upholds educational quality, preserves the school's distinctive identity, and allows flexibility to respond to future challenges. Strategic planning, investment in staff and space, and a commitment to innovation will be essential to MTCHS's sustained success.