



With You Every Step

Menominee Nation High School Case Study

When Halle Laverdure of **Somerville Architects & Engineers** stepped out of her first meeting with the **Menominee Indian School District** about designing the district's new 114,500-square-foot high school, she knew she needed support to bring her ideas to life.

"Our team was challenged with designing this brand-new high school to support a modern learning environment, while also incorporating the Menominee Tribe's culture, history, and values."

The district, based in Keshena, Wisconsin, is on the Menominee reservation, and most students and faculty are part of the tribe. In their design meetings, the idea of "walking in two worlds" was a theme that came up consistently—the importance of students being able to learn and thrive in today's society while staying connected to the shared culture of the tribe.

"And I thought, walking in two worlds was such an interesting idea—what if we created a custom floor design to support that storytelling in a way traditional schools don't often utilize?"

The main entrance to the high school that leads into the large commons provided the ideal place to tell that story. As a tribute to the Menominee's logging industry and to foster a connection with nature, a wood-look floor immediately resonates with students as they enter. Incorporating elements representing the sun, nearby rivers, and wayfinding also add visual intrigue to a vast space while creating connection points to respected community elements.

The vision was taking place in Halle's mind—but the right flooring partner would make or break this project.

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THE CHALLENGE

Given the building's purpose, luxury vinyl tile (LVT) was the best way to create a beautiful wood look with the longevity and durability needed in an educational environment. The durability offered by LVT was a must-have characteristic in a school serving a growing student population, and its elevated aesthetics would be well-suited for the commons and corridors. The district liked that the maintenance and upkeep of LVT were streamlined, and they felt that LVT could support the environment they were hoping to build. The elements of the sun, river, and a custom compass motif could be incorporated on the floor with LVT, too, provided Halle used some creative sourcing on her end.

However, the project hinged on finding the right performance-driven LVT with suitable colorways that blended with the school's other interior spaces. Given the project's intricacies and its desire to use remnant cuttings in other areas of the school, the whole process needed significant technical support.

THE SOLUTION

Halle's first call was to Roxanne Carlson, a Milliken & Company flooring account manager who had become a trusted partner for the Somerville team. Drawing on Milliken's diverse flooring portfolio, Roxanne offered a wide range of design-forward product solutions tailored to meet Halle's unique design challenges.

After discussing the project in greater detail with Roxanne, Halle decided that Milliken's ProGuard MAX™ LVT, Milliken's innovative top-wear layer that far surpassed traditional wear coating options, would give the school the best durability profile, and many of the collections offered 5.0-size planks to support the design vision.

- The [Magic Hour collection](#) brought a clean, simple wood look in a light color, ideal for Halle's vision. Using a wood color with no orange undertone helped ensure a cohesive look across the LVT collections.
- The [Lumenology collection](#) offered the preferred blue and yellow colorways to represent the river and the sun. It also had black and white colorways to support the compass motif.

Once the flooring collections were chosen, Roxanne pulled in [Milliken's VisionLAB](#) to help bring Halle's design to life. VisionLAB created immersive visualizations that illustrated Halle's vision throughout the review process. They also developed detailed installation and seaming diagrams to guide the installer's work, ensuring each cut and placement aligned with the overall design.

"These seaming diagrams help bridge the communication between designers and installers, who may not always share the same technical language," shared Roxanne. "Milliken's VisionLAB is a significant resource that our customers can tap into to create beautiful and highly precise designs using innovative Milliken flooring products."



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Roxanne Carlson
Flooring Account Manager, Milliken & Company

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”

Kate Mikle

Principal, Menominee Nation High School

THE RESULTS

“The compass, which grounds students and faculty as soon as they enter the building, was a detail specifically requested during design, and it turned out beautifully,” Halle shared, illustrating the meaning behind the final flooring design. “The meandering blue flooring running down the corridors represents the Wolf and Menominee rivers, two significant rivers in the Menominee culture that still influence tribal life today. Lastly, the yellow stripe follows the sun's rising and setting path, with the building entrance orientating students and visitors when they enter on the East side and exit on the West side. All of this is anchored by the natural wood-look flooring, which beautifully highlights the environment that is so significant to the Menominee tribe.”

The Menominee Nation High School was dedicated on August 29, 2024, just in time for the 2024-2025 school year, to shared praise from the school administration and the community alike. Principal Kate Mikle shared, “Opening this new high school underscores the importance of a meaningful yet functional school environment. We're thrilled to see this design come to life, and we look forward to our students, faculty and community enjoying these educational spaces for years to come.”

Thanks to the precise visualizations and seaming guidelines, building consensus for the project was a light lift. Roxanne supported Halle every step of the way, creating a thoughtful partnership, troubleshooting challenges and co-creating solutions. “With its diverse color and texture selections, blended with the performance needed in an education setting, Milliken LVT was the ideal choice for the project,” added Halle. “The service Roxanne and the VisionLAB team provided was the game-changing resource that supported the project in ways that went above and beyond.”

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