



WINDLAND SMITH RICE BUILDING

CASE STUDY:

WINDLAND SMITH RICE BUILDING, ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL.
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.



A life and a school that inspire.

A school is a place to inspire, to help students realize their potential. So what more fitting way to celebrate an extraordinary woman and her extraordinary life than to fund a state-of-the-art educational facility at her alma mater.

The recently completed middle school and library at St. Mary's Episcopal School is named in memory of Windland Smith Rice, an alumna, renowned nature photographer, and daughter of FedEx founder Fred Smith.

Spanning 53,000 square feet, the striking new building houses 16 classrooms, four study rooms, two computer labs and three science labs, a flexible-learning lab and a distance-learning lab, a music room, and a 13,500 square foot library.

The building's design evolved out of a highly interactive process between Fleming Associates Architects and members of the Smith family and St. Mary's staff. Together, they came up with a list of objectives that included reflecting the quality of St. Mary's superior academic programs, creating space for community and connection, and expressing Mrs. Rice's joyful personality.

The experience of the Windland Smith Rice Building begins in the three-story gallery. A monumental metal-and-glass staircase resembling a roll of film unwinds up to the main entrance of the middle school. The photography motif continues in the terrazzo floor and the skylight 43 feet above, which suggest a camera aperture and lens respectively. Curvilinear walls

along the staircase extend the gallery, providing a dramatic canvas for Mrs. Rice's nature photographs.

As students cross the threshold into the middle school, curving patterns in the ceiling and carpeting and gently curved walls evoke Mrs. Rice's exuberance and encourage the girls to embrace their love of fun and discovery. In the classrooms and lab areas, purposeful design elements and carefully selected furnishings work together to support the multitasking nature and habits of students and teachers.

"We pursue the best research-based decisions for how to teach and how to learn," says Mr. Throckmorton. "When we found out that VS Furniture grounds its furniture solutions in research that really struck a chord with us. The more we learned, the more certain we

became that VS Furniture was the right choice for us."

PantoSwing, PantoMove, and PantoMoveUp chairs are used throughout the middle school. Their ergonomic design allows the girls to change their sitting position throughout the day, which is critical to student success. Research studies show a significant relationship between movement and mental fitness.

"Growing bodies have a natural need to move," explains Dr. Dieter Breithecker, Europe's foremost expert on the relationship between ergonomic design in educational furniture and the physical development of school children. "Increased opportunities to move while seated, including rocking, swiveling, and rolling, improve blood flow and oxygen to the brain, thereby increasing attention and concentration levels."



To ensure perfect fit, the school's principal measured the heights of all 228 middle schoolers so that VS Furniture could recommend the correct chair and desk height for the range of student sizes. The company offers six different heights – based on the DIN ISO 5970 standard – to ensure that students have appropriately sized classroom furniture.

The diverse size range was an even greater challenge when it came to furnishing the school's different lab areas, which are used by both middle and high school students.

In the science labs, Fleming Associates Architects found the perfect solution in height-adjustable PantoMove and PantoMoveUp chairs.

For the distance-learning lab, the firm specified PantoMove-2K chairs with custom-uphol-

stered seats and beechwood backs and a customized-desking solution using Sit-and-Stand tables with 27 3/8 inches up to 44 3/4 inches of height adjustability and work-surface shapes designed by St. Mary's faculty. PantoMove-2K chairs are also used in the school's two computer labs.

"The teachers were very concerned that students have enough room for laptops, textbooks, and note taking," says Veronica Tansey, Director of Interior Design for Fleming Associates Architects. "They're in love with how the custom undulating convex and concave tabletops solve this issue while still offering an interesting design feature. They love how smoothly and easily the Sit-and-Stand tables raise and lower."

In the main learning and study spaces, the teaching staff requested classroom fur-

niture that could be quickly rearranged. Ms. Tansy chose PantoSwing chairs and Uno-M Skid tables for the students and height-adjustable PantoMove chairs and RondoLift tables for the instructors.

Flexible, durable, and easy to clean, Uno-M tables provide extra large metal-grid book baskets, a hook for holding backpacks and purses, and wear-resistant tops that easily wipe clean of pen, marker, and other stains. The PantoSwing chairs have an anatomically shaped seat shell that lets students sit forward or backward or in any other position they choose. The shells also allow the chairs to nest neatly on top of the tables without causing scuffmarks. Additionally, both tables and chairs are equipped with non-marring glides.

By utilizing RondoLift tables as teachers' desks, Ms. Tansey fulfilled three purposes with one piece of furniture: basic sitting-height desk, lectern, and group table for team projects and student-teacher interactions. Utilizing a built-in gas spring with release lever, RondoLift tables raise easily and stop at any point to stand as solidly as a fixed-height table – all without cranks to turn or catch on clothes or pins to pull out and line up.

The new middle school also includes common areas with wooden lockers, lounges, and tables. The alcoves serve as a way of giving each grade a unique identity and gathering place.

The Windland Smith Rice Building has been in use for several months and every day students and teachers come to class smiling from ear to ear.



"Everyone is just blown away by the building," says Mr. Throckmorton. "They say it's beautiful. They adore all the new furniture in their rooms. They love how much better and easier their classrooms work, and how comfortable the chairs are."

"But the best and most frequent compliment we get, is that it's all so intentional. Students, teachers, parents, visitors, they all understand that everything we did, we did for a reason."

Project Profile: St. Mary's Episcopal School, Middle School and Library.

Objectives:

- World-class learning environments
- Flexibility / Ease of change
- Collaboration / Community
- Unique identity for middle school
- Commemorate Windland Smith Rice

Applications:

- Classrooms
- Commons area for each grade
- Computer labs
- Distance-learning lab
- Faculty workroom
- Music room
- Science labs
- Study rooms
- Testing rooms
- Library – 13,500 sq. ft.

Project Scope:

53,000 sq.ft.; three floors

Products:

- PantoMove-2K Chairs
- PantoMove-LuPo Chairs
- PantoMoveUp Chairs
- PantoMoveUp Stools
- PantoSwing Chairs
- PantoSwing-VF Chairs
- RondoLift Tables
- Sit-and-Stand Tables
- Uno-M Skid Tables

Results:

- Roomier, more organized, more adaptable classrooms
- Dedicated space for informal gathering
- Strong sense of place for fifth through eighth graders
- Unique aesthetic identity for the middle school
- Enduring memorial to Windland Smith Rice

Year Completed:

2008

VS America, Inc.:

1940 Abbott Street
Camden Square Village West
Unit 501
USA – Charlotte, NC 28203
Phone: 704-378-6500
Fax: 704-378-6005

info@vs-furniture.com
www.vs-furniture.com

