St. Anthony School is a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade Catholic school community in Hawthorne, New Jersey. The school’s purpose is to prepare students for life in the new millennium. Its vision embraces the idea that each child has religious, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical potential that can be developed by a curriculum and environment that aids each child to become a well-developed individual with the skills needed to reach her/his highest potential.
In 2010, the facilities team at St. Anthony School embarked on a renovation project that required knocking down the walls between the computer lab and library to create a new 21st century media center within the 87-year old school building.

“The media center simply did not reflect the school’s vision of a modern technology environment,” said Sr. Marisa DeRose, principal of St. Anthony School. “The tables and desks in the classrooms were worn and mismatched. Moving the current computer lab furniture into the classrooms would allow us to then create a state-of-the-art media center to enhance the teaching and learning capabilities.”

Mary Wrenn, math/technology coordinator at St. Anthony School explained that the new media center required furniture that brought the new learning space together. It had to be technology-enabled while allowing the students to interact. “We needed mobility so we could move the equipment around the room or school.” She added that the plan was to also use the new space for meetings and activities in the community.
St. Anthony School integrated 15 of Bretford’s Connections tables throughout the media center to support clusters of computers for instruction and research. The Connections tables are height-adjustable and come standard with CPU holders. “13 of the computer tables are in a U-shaped configuration and hold 26 new all-in-one computers. The other two tables hold our printing workstations,” said Wrenn. “The clean look of the tables gives the space an open feeling not often achievable in a computer lab.”

Within the media center are two instructional areas where Bretford’s mobile instructor desk and Presenter’s Assistant for Learning (PAL) cart are utilized. “Our technology teacher uses the multimedia teacher’s workstation as her base of operation. At the same time, the PAL cart is used to make school-wide presentations in the auditorium and classroom presentations in the music and art rooms,” said Wrenn.

Bretford’s mobile instructor desks are sitting height with large work surfaces and room for a computer and additional workspace. They have rolling and locking casters for easy transport. The PAL cart supports a data projector, document camera, DVD player, sound system, rack-mounted electronics, two equipment shelves and a pull-out shelf for a laptop but is compact enough to easily fit between a row of students.

St. Anthony School also uses a 30-unit intelligent laptop cart, which was brought in for mobile computing with the Wi-Fi access in the media center. Bretford’s laptop cart incorporates a Power Management System or “brain” to decrease heat in the cart and proportionally distribute charge to the laptops, saving energy and extending battery life.

All of the Bretford products used in St. Anthony School are GREENGUARD Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Certified. These products help create good indoor air quality and support a healthy environment that is conducive to positive learning.

“Everyone who sees the room can tell the pieces are durable and manufactured from high quality materials. The furniture completes the space and makes it exactly the type of 21st century learning environment that we imagined it would be.”
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The new media center was completed in November of 2010 and is now fully in use, both during the school year by students and faculty and over the summer by educators and the community.

“The students, parents, staff and parishioners can’t believe the transformation, and visitors who hadn’t previously seen the room are also very impressed,” said Sr. DeRose. “All the computer and library classes for 3-year olds to 8th graders take place in the new media center. Additionally, we have used it for webinars and our junior high students even participated in a ‘global town hall’ meeting with students and scientists from around the world using our technology and furniture.”

Wrenn explained that the new space has opened many doors. “We hosted a diocesan technology roundtable in the spring and the visiting teachers were actually envious of our learning space. This summer we are hosting two diocesan professional development opportunities for schools selected to be part of a pilot science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program.” She added, “We never would’ve been able to bring educators together in our environment without the Bretford furniture in our media center.” Wrenn said that as the STEM program gets underway this fall, the laptops will be used several hours a day. The efficiency of Bretford’s laptop cart with its single plug to charge the whole cart is crucial for the program to run smoothly.

“Because of the adjustable heights of the Connections tables, we are able to have a section that is set lower for our younger students,” added Wrenn. “And the cable management system that neatly hides the wires helps to keep the workspace clutter-free. The tables also provide ample workspace for the students.”

Wrenn noted that the mobile workstation allows the technology teacher to set up various pieces of hardware that monitor student progress, offer assistance and demonstrate and make network adjustments from one location. “And because the PAL cart enables us to bring different technology equipment in one unit, our art and music teachers now have the opportunity to integrate technology into their lessons.”

“The response to all the Bretford furniture has been so positive,” concluded Wrenn. “Everyone who sees the room can tell the pieces are durable and manufactured from high quality materials. The furniture completes the space and makes it exactly the type of 21st century learning environment that we imagined it would be.”