



P.S. duPont Elementary School, Wilmington, DE

noraplan environcare™ Blends Past and Future in Historic Renovation Project

Brandywine School District in Wilmington, DE, recently completed the largest renovation project in Delaware history – a two-year, \$44 million renovation of P.S. duPont Elementary School, designed by ABHA Architects Inc.

Built in 1934 and 1935 to accommodate the area's 2,000 high school students, P.S. duPont Elementary School is now home to approximately 750 students enrolled in early childhood/kindergarten programs and grades four, five and six. The state-of-the-art facility that reopened last September subtly incorporates improved lighting and acoustics, integrated educational technology, energy-saving features and sustainable floor coverings from nora systems, Inc.

But, the school also showcases the retained and restored wood trim, plaster ceilings and terrazzo and oak floors that enrich the learning experience in the historic building. "Education was our first priority," said John Read, Brandywine's construction manager, referencing the goals of the renovation project. "But preserving the history that surrounds us was a close second."

"I think we did a good job maintaining the historical integrity of the school, which is listed on the National Register of Historical Places, while introducing the new technology, energy-saving features and sustainable design elements that make the school such a seamless blending of old and new," said Chandra Nilekani, ABHA principal.

The floors that run throughout the building speak to Nilekani's point. Most classrooms feature the original hardwood floors. In hallways, however, 3mm noraplan environcare™ runs where linoleum and carpet once did. The school district made the decision to install nora floor coverings confidently, based on the results of a two-year test.

According to Read, the district installed six different floor coverings, including noraplan environcare, in the high school's busiest hallway. "It was the place where kids enter the building with their muddy feet," he recalled. "For two years all six floor samples took a beating, and at the end of the test, the nora floor covering was the obvious winner. We finally had our long-sought-after alternative to VCT flooring."



ABHA conducted historical research on the P.S. duPont school, including the colors in the original linoleum. Nilekani turned to the nora color palette to closely match the firm's findings. "The nora palette offered a wide range of colors that helped achieve the look we wanted to recreate."

According to Rau, the installation of the flooring went smoothly, thanks in large part to the technical support nora offered. "nora was involved in this project from the time we did the mockup through the actual installation," Rau said. "From my experience, their support service is awesome."

The results were pleasing to everyone. "The floor covering's low maintenance benefits, its great sound absorption and impact resistance qualities and the wide range of colors it offered made it the perfect choice for visually scaling down large high-school style spaces for younger children," said Nilekani. "It allowed us to create just the right environment for early childhood programs as well as elementary grade students."

Read, too, is quick to point to the benefits of the nora floor covering. "It contributes to a quieter, more comfortable environment, and it's certainly easier to clean, saving us time and money," he said. "In fact, we recently awarded \$90,000 for the purchase of floor care products for the 18 buildings in our school district. Because of the nora floor covering, none of these products are necessary for P.S. duPont. All we use to maintain the floors is mild soap and water."

"And the less we spend on floor care products, the more we're able to spend on education. I have to believe we've created a much healthier environment for our students, because we're not using strippers, waxes and harsh cleaners, and our custodians are able to turn their attention to other projects."

"What's more, the floor looks great!" Read added. "You walk through the school and you don't find scuffs anywhere. The floor covering is performing extremely well and blends perfectly with the original architectural features of the school for a look that is very respectful of the history we've worked so hard to preserve."

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John Read
Construction Manager
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