

Classroom

# WHERE TO START

A K-12 educator's guide to  
furniture that fosters engaging,  
active-learning spaces.

FURNITURE FOR INSPIRED LEARNING.®



SMITH SYSTEM®

Today's classrooms are more than static learning spaces. They're living laboratories of endless opportunity—and ground zero for teaching next generation learning principles. That's why creating an inspiring classroom environment with the right furnishings has never been more important.

But first, let's put that importance into context.



# What do students need to know?

## **QUICK ANSWER:**

More than they used to, and more than they can find online. It's not enough for students to master the core content areas of reading, writing and math, or to be digital device jockies. They need to acquire a skillset to last a lifetime of rapid change. And the unknown.

# CONTEXT

The gold standard for preparing tomorrow's workforce is solid academics paired with 21st Century skills. Simplified, that means the 4Cs:

- **COLLABORATION:** Students work effectively with diverse groups and compromise to achieve common goals.
- **CREATIVITY:** Students generate and improve on original ideas and also work creatively with others.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Students communicate effectively across multiple media platforms and for various purposes.
- **CRITICAL THINKING:** Students analyze, evaluate and understand complex systems and apply strategies to solve real-life problems.



[> VIEW FLAVORS CHAIR](#)

# How Educators Are Responding

Schools are adopting curricula and methods to accomplish this tall order in several ways.

At the forefront is:

- Project-based learning – challenging students to investigate real-world problems and design their own solutions.
- Technology – making valuable information easily accessible and helping students create their own original content.
- Working collaboratively – helping them navigate the social aspects of teamwork, including cooperation, conflict resolution, and compromise.



# Furniture Matters. Layout Matters.

Much of this learning doesn't come naturally to students. Teachers must guide them, providing abundant opportunities to practice and show that learning is engaging, participatory and fun. It begins by removing physical hurdles. The classroom space and its coordinated furnishings should shape—even direct—the learning environment.

# 3 Essential Aspects of the Classroom Layout

Classroom design is a fundamental step in making learning first on the agenda. Here are three modern concepts that can help boost student achievement:



**CLUSTERS  
(OR PODS)**



**LEARNING  
ZONES**



**TEACHER  
MOBILITY**



## CLUSTERS (OR PODS)

Small clusters of chairs and desks accommodate today's learners who prefer interactive and social activities. It allows students to work collaboratively in compact pods of two to six, to interact directly, see facial expressions and establish eye contact.

### **Furniture Recommendations:**

- **SEATING:** Durable chairs on wheels or light-weight seating that students can quickly arrange into groups. Chairs should offer generous support and directional movement for comfort.
- **WORK SURFACES:** Versatile and sturdy work surfaces (desks or meeting tables) that can fit snugly together for teamwork within various configurations.
- **POWER:** Instant-access power accessories for uninterrupted learning.



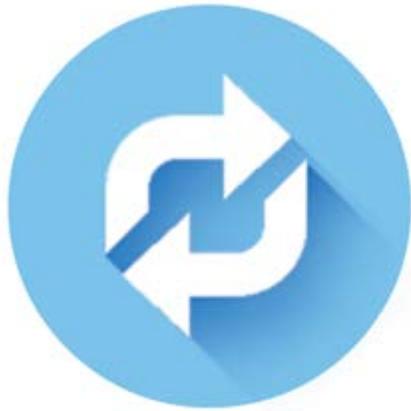


## LEARNING ZONES

Learning zones turn one classroom into several defined spaces that direct the learning behavior desired. There can be a collaborative zone, independent learning zone, play zone, maker zone and more. There are no limits. Defined learning zones empower students to move freely to the area that suits the work they're doing. Moving from one area to another helps them both learn and retain more.

### **Furniture Recommendations:**

- **SEATING:** Various seating options that fit each zone, such as chairs on wheels for collaborative zone, soft seating for reading or independent learning, limited-option seating for forward-facing instruction.
- **WORK SURFACES:** Various desk and table options to fit each zone.
- **POWER:** Instant-access power accessories.
- **STORAGE:** Mobile storage units, either enclosed or with personal totes, to store supplies or rotate out learning props.



## TEACHER MOBILITY

Teachers should move freely about the room, with no barriers. Today's learners like instant access to information and a mobile teacher can move easily from group to group to field questions and facilitate discussions.

### **Furniture Recommendations:**

- SEATING: Ergonomically smart teacher chairs that allow them to easily help students.
- DESKS: Mobile lecterns or desks that can follow the teacher or be quickly moved aside for presentation space.
- STORAGE: Mobile storage units, either enclosed to store supplies out of site, or with personal totes to help students stay organized.

[> VIEW TEACHERS FURNITURE](#)



# Outdated Classroom vs. 21st Century Classroom

	<b>OUTDATED CLASSROOM</b>	<b>21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM</b>
 <b>SPACE LAYOUT</b>	Desks and chairs in tidy rows that face forward	Multi-use learning zones spread throughout classroom; wireless access
 <b>FURNITURE</b>	Hard, one-size-fits-all stationary desk with attached chair	Comfortable, mobile furniture that meets broad curriculum goals
 <b>TEACHER'S ROLE</b>	Stagnant at front of room or chalkboard	Roving instructor, helper, facilitator
 <b>STUDENT'S ROLE</b>	Listens quietly; rote memory is awarded within competitive environment	Collaborative problem-solver, maker, content generator
 <b>CURRICULUM</b>	Three Rs: reading writing, arithmetic	Project-based, technology driven, collaborative, globally connected

# A Word About Gimmicks

Put simply, skip gimmicky chairs and desk shapes. Future-proof classrooms by choosing furnishings that are durable and **sensible in design** with plenty of versatility. That means chairs and tables with options for casters, height changes and timeless color choices.

# Planning the collaborative environment.

Collaborative environments begin with furnishings that provide options.

Smith System's vast dealer network and experienced regional sales team are here to help you plan and deliver the most inspiring learning environments.

**GET IN TOUCH:**  
[smithsystem.com/contact-us](http://smithsystem.com/contact-us)  
800-328-1061

Room Layout Ideas

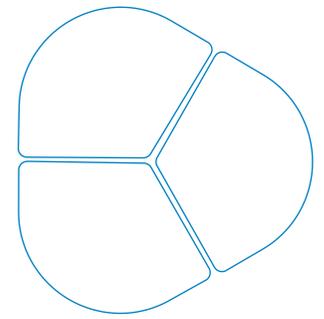
**Room View:**

Interchange 3-2-1  
two-student desks

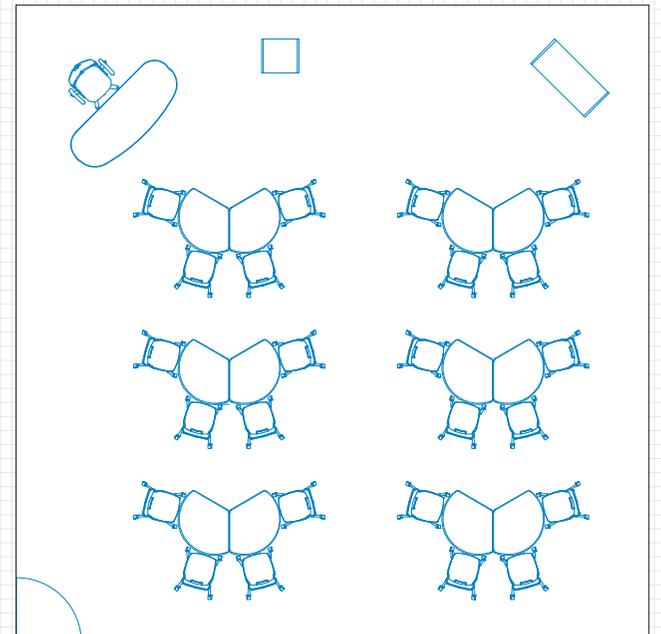
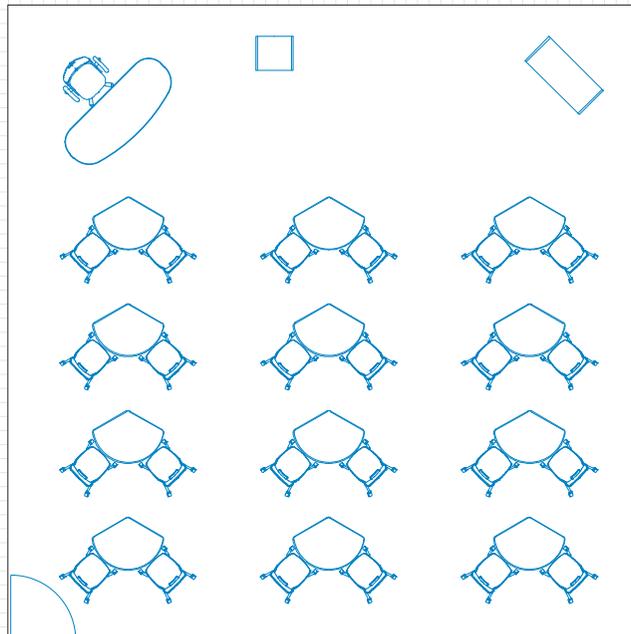
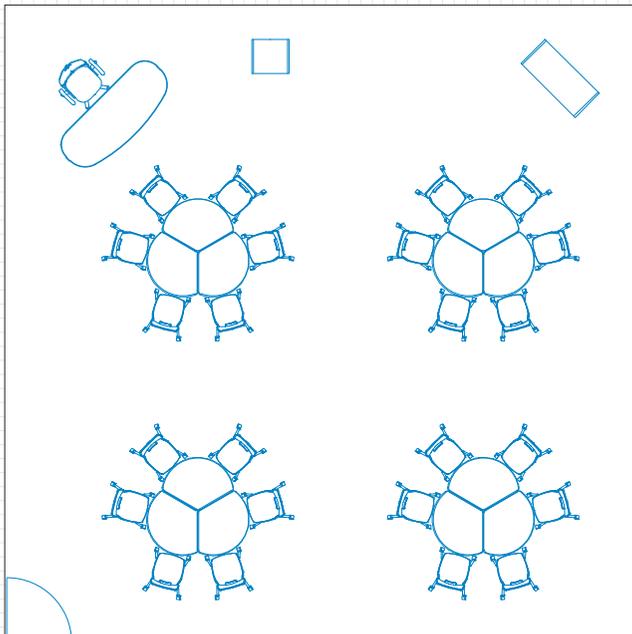
*Shown:  
24 Students  
900 sq. ft.*

**Countdown to versatility.**

Do Interchange™ 3-2-1 Desks offer 321 options for room layouts? They may. Without counting, here are a few ways these space-efficient desks can be arranged for work in pairs, threes and sixes. Note how compactly the six-student groups fit into the space and how the desks allow other configurations (semi-circles and pairs) to suit the lesson.



[> VIEW INTERCHANGE 321](#)



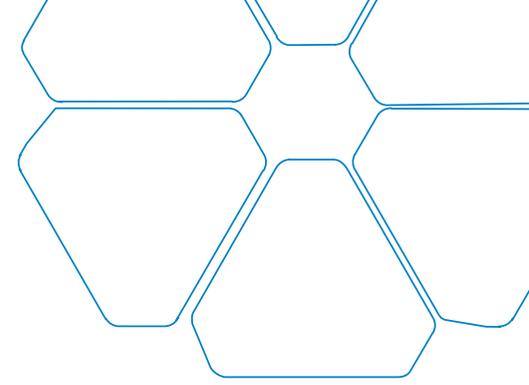
## Room View:

### Mini-Diamond Desks

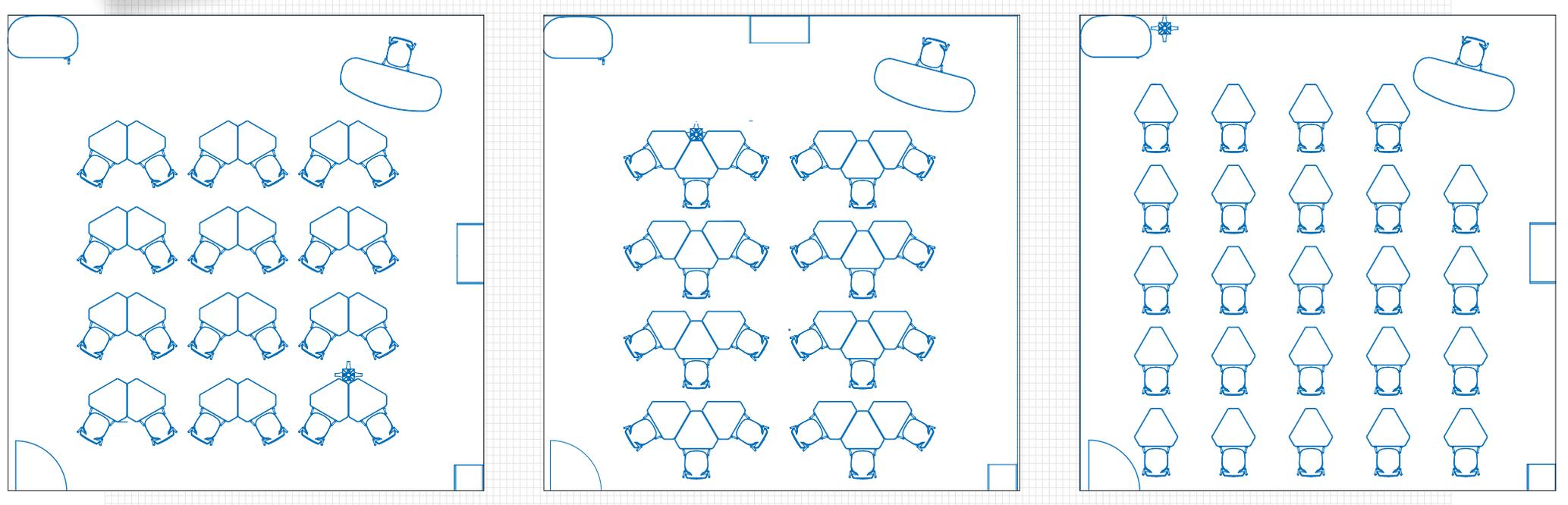
*Shown:  
24 Students  
784 sq. ft.*

## Mini-Diamonds for maxi-options.

In a collaborative environment, students work individually and in groups. So do these space-efficient Interchange™ Mini Diamond Desks. Notice how compactly groups of six fit into the space and how well the desks can be arranged into semi-circles, pairs and threes) to suit the lesson. Mini Diamond Desks are available in the UXL™ and Interchange lines.



[VIEW DIAMOND DESK](#)



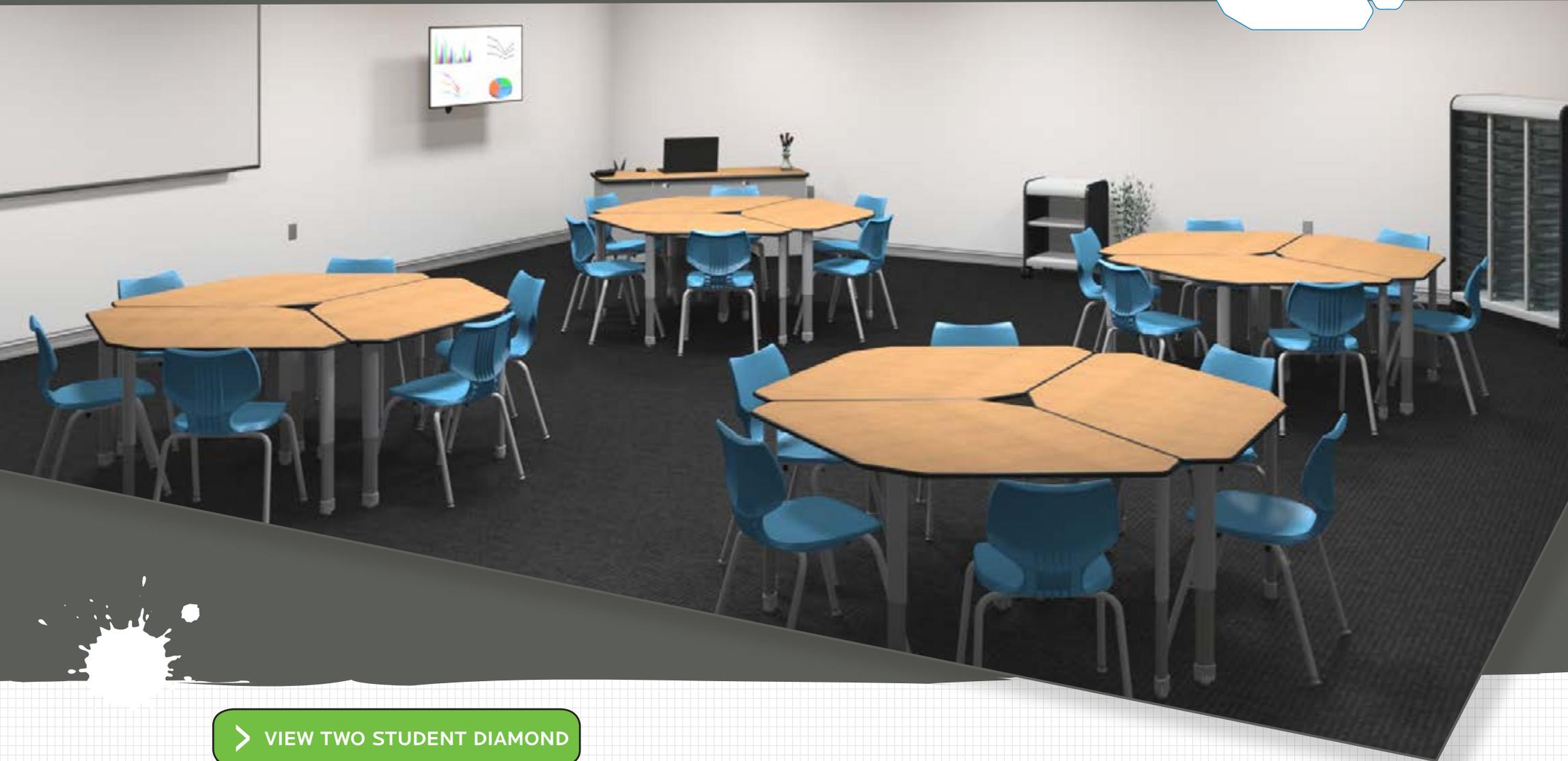
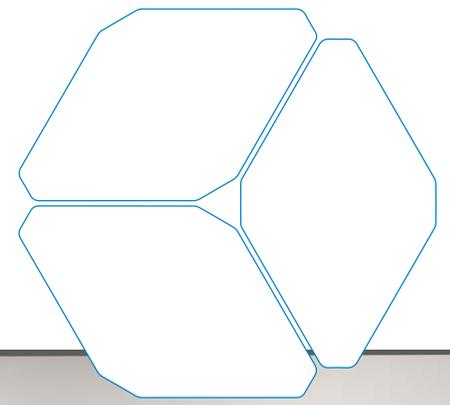
## Room View:

### Two Student-Diamond Desks

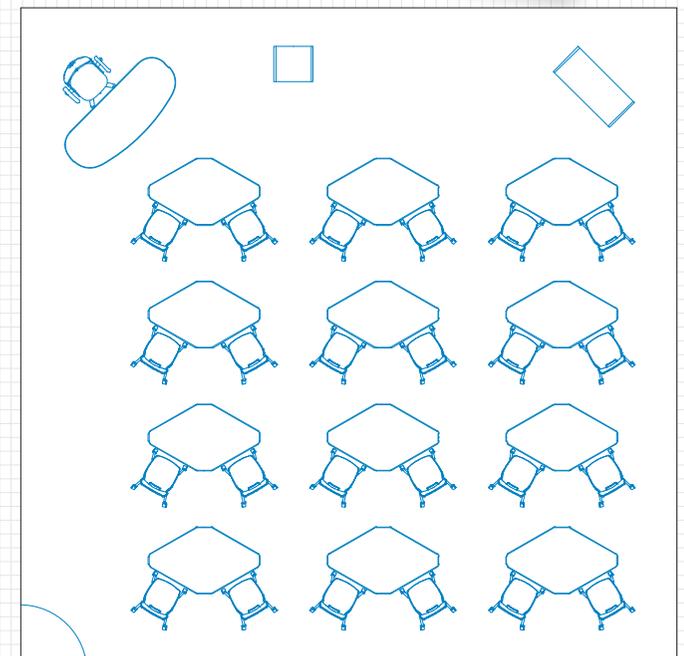
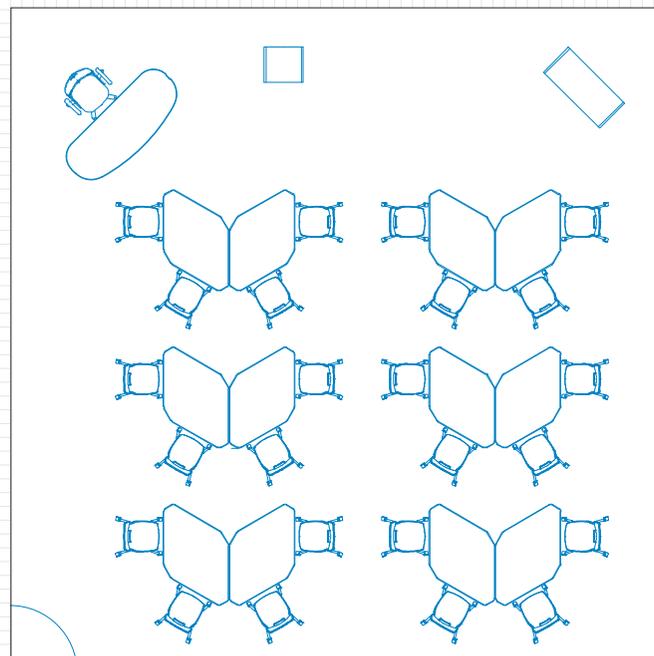
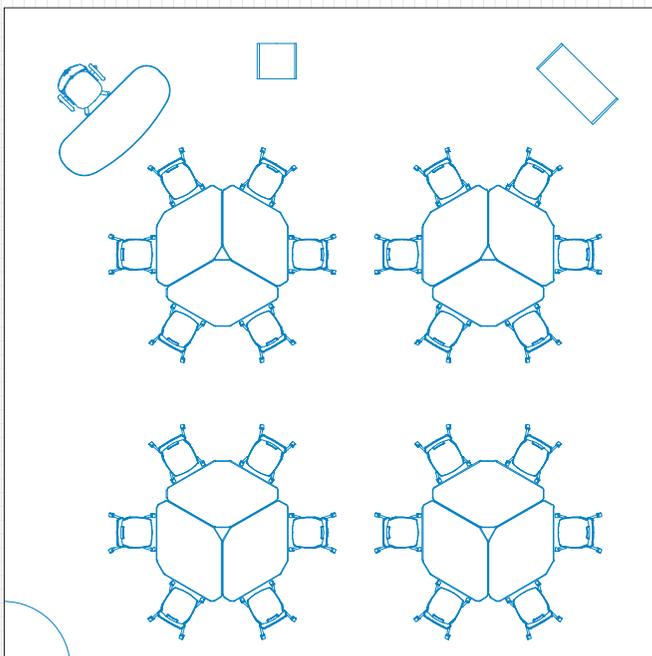
Shown:  
24 Students  
900 sq. ft.

## Versatility raised to the power of two.

Space efficient diamonds are a classroom's best friend, as shown here by these Interchange™ Two-Student Diamond Desks. They are set up for group work in pairs, fours and sixes. Note how compactly the groups of six fit into the space and how easily the desks can be arranged in other configurations (like semi-circles and pairs) to suit the lesson.



> VIEW TWO STUDENT DIAMOND



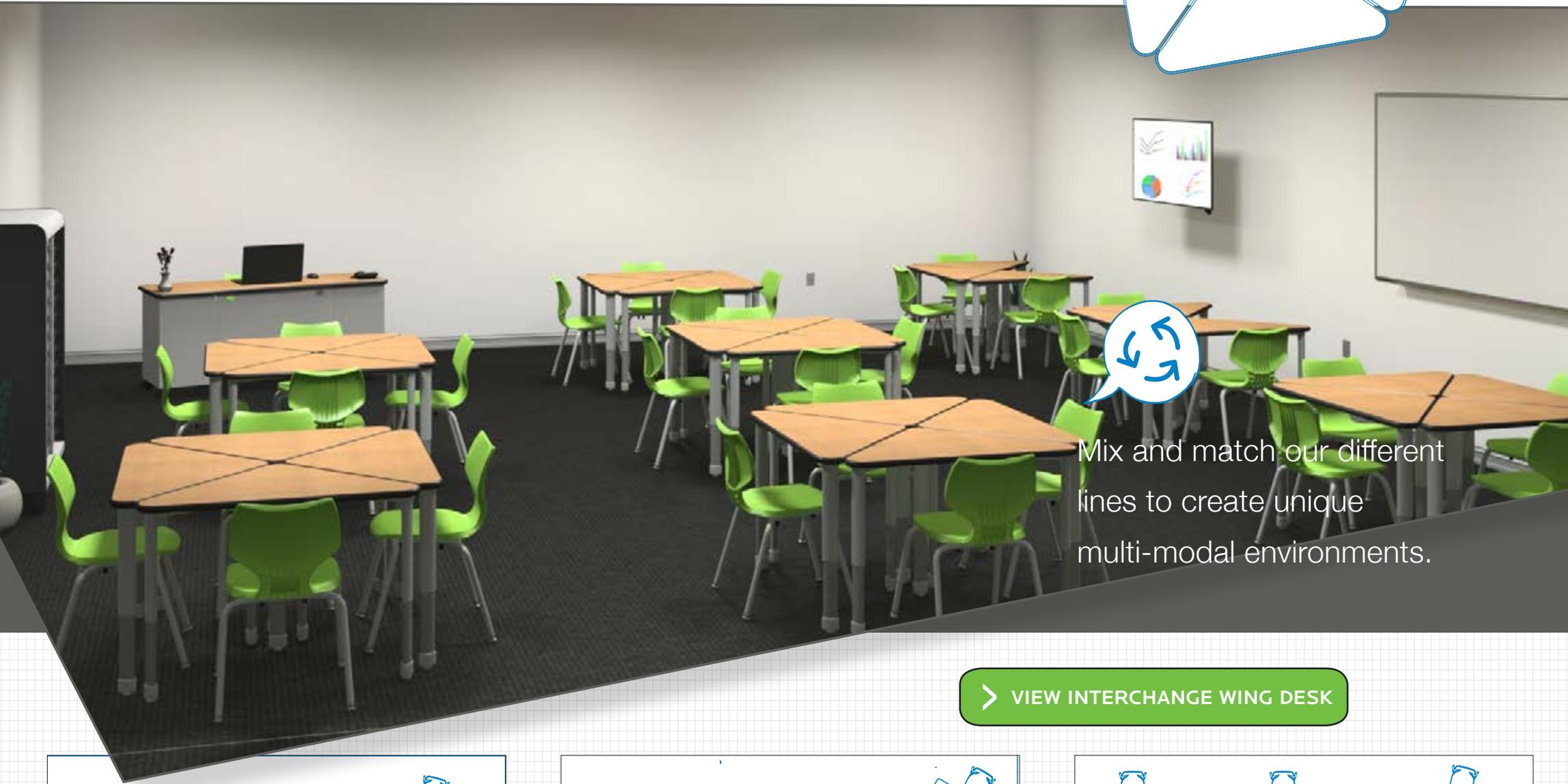
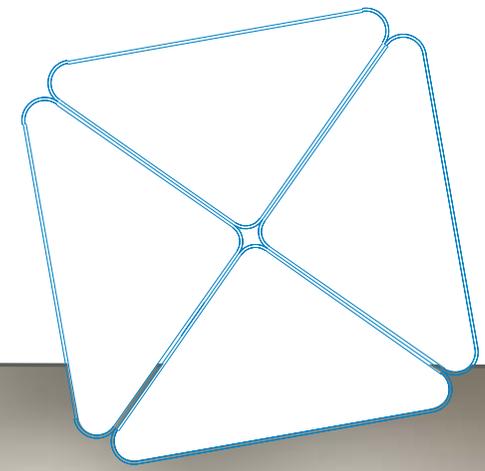
## Room View:

### Wing Desks

*Shown:*  
30 Students  
784 sq. ft.

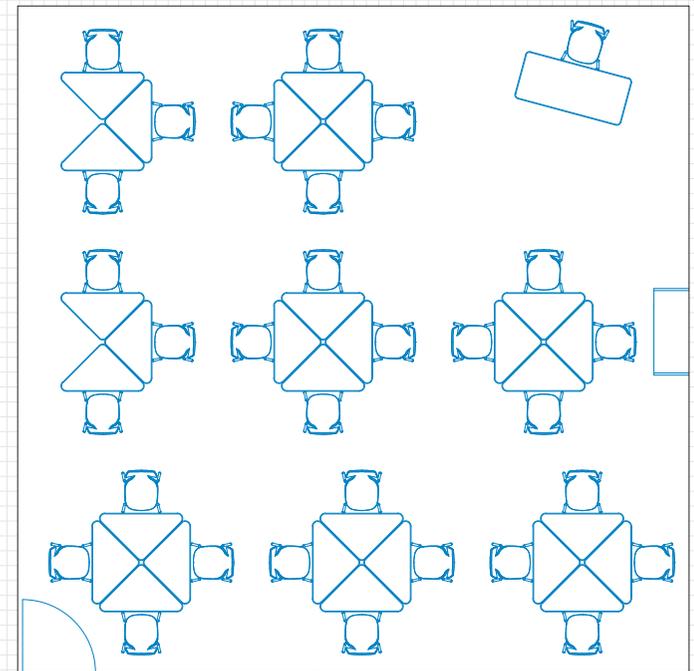
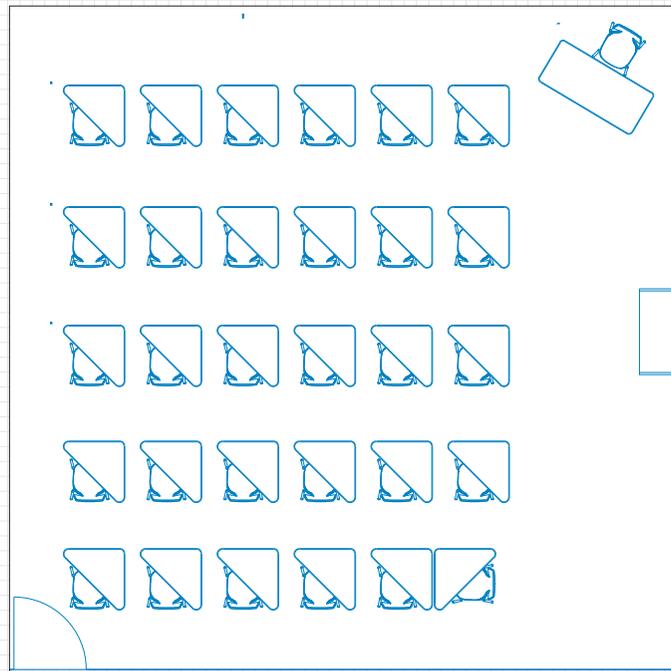
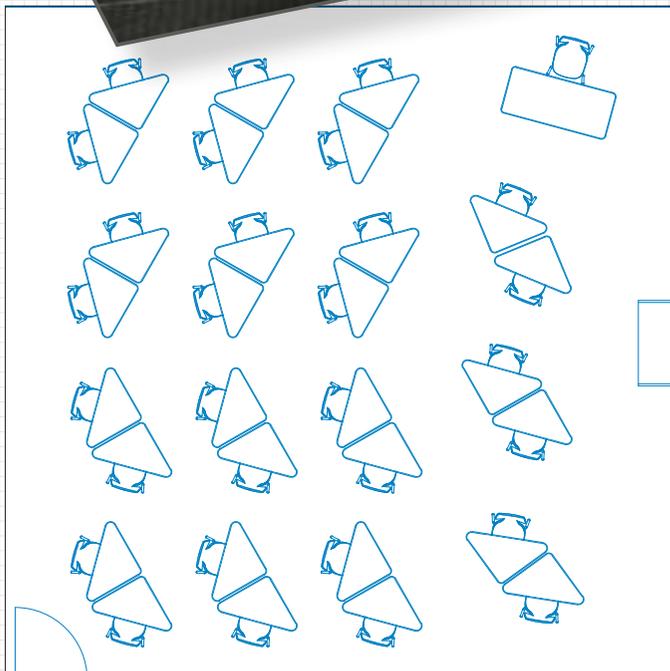
## One of the most popular choices.

With the need to save space in today's classrooms, educators and students alike endorse the Interchange™ Wing Desk. It provides a wide, stable workspace as well as great flexibility by allowing configurations in compact clusters of up to four students. Its wing design also enables work to take place in groups of three or two, or individually.



Mix and match our different lines to create unique multi-modal environments.

> VIEW INTERCHANGE WING DESK



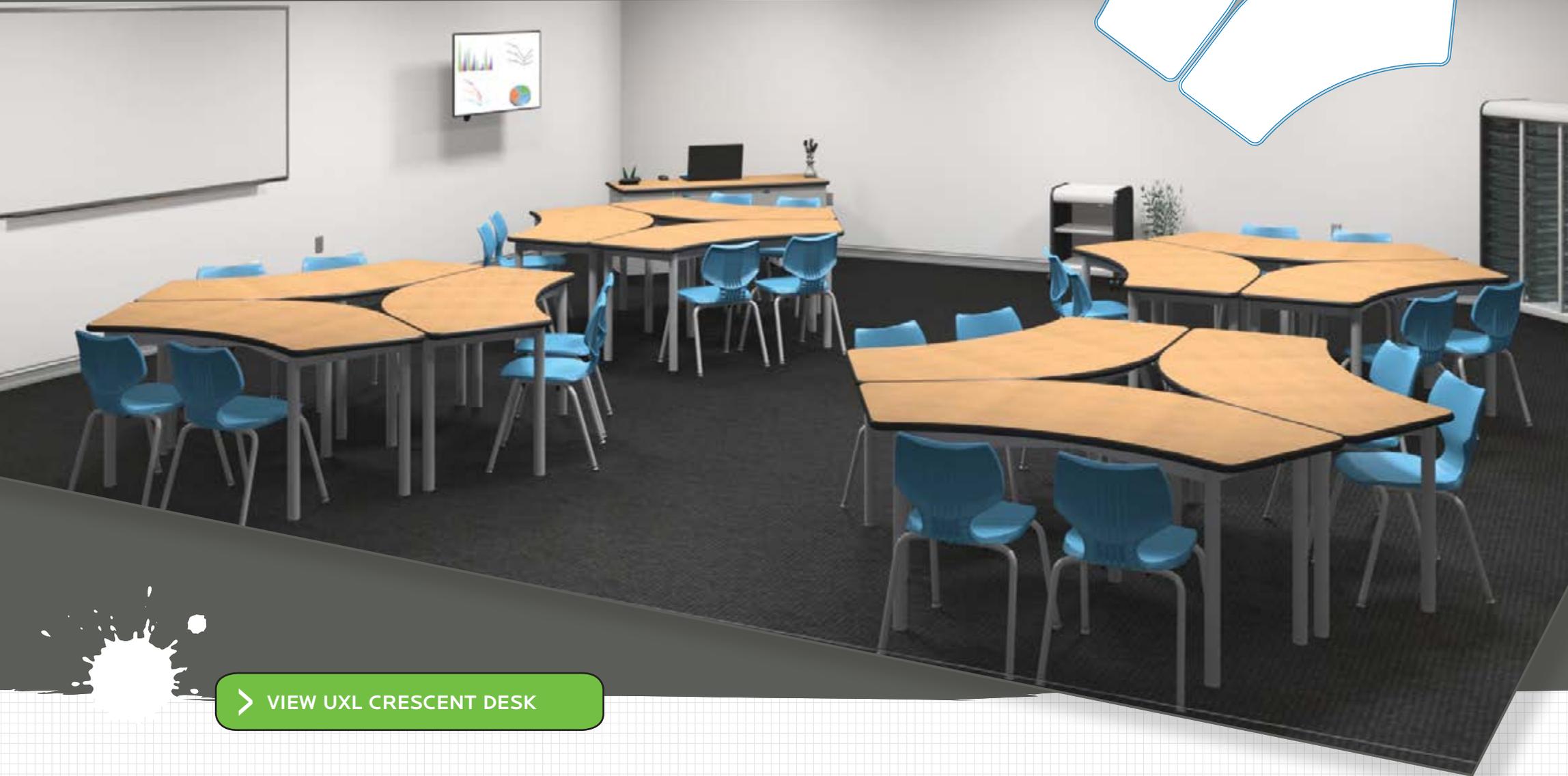
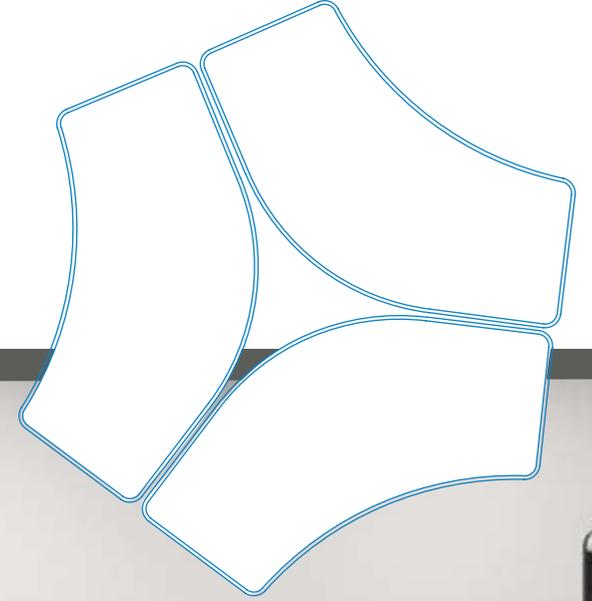
## Room View:

### UXL Crescent

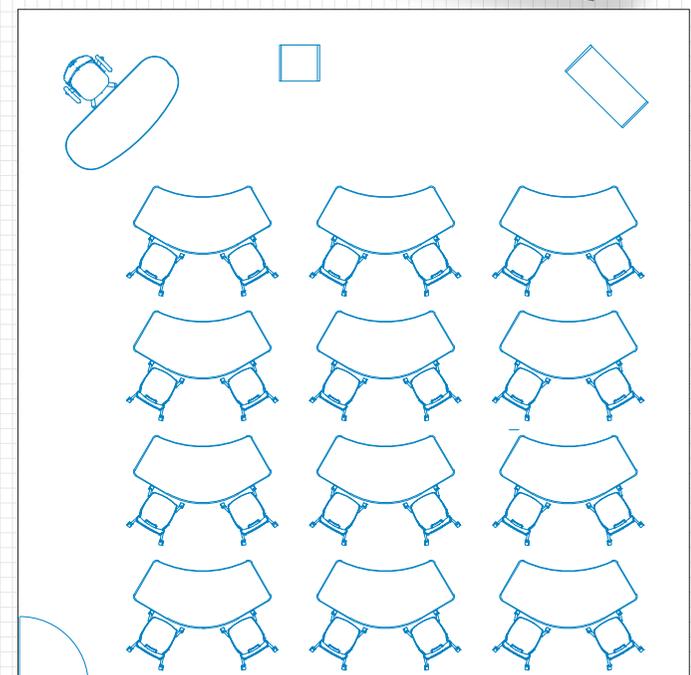
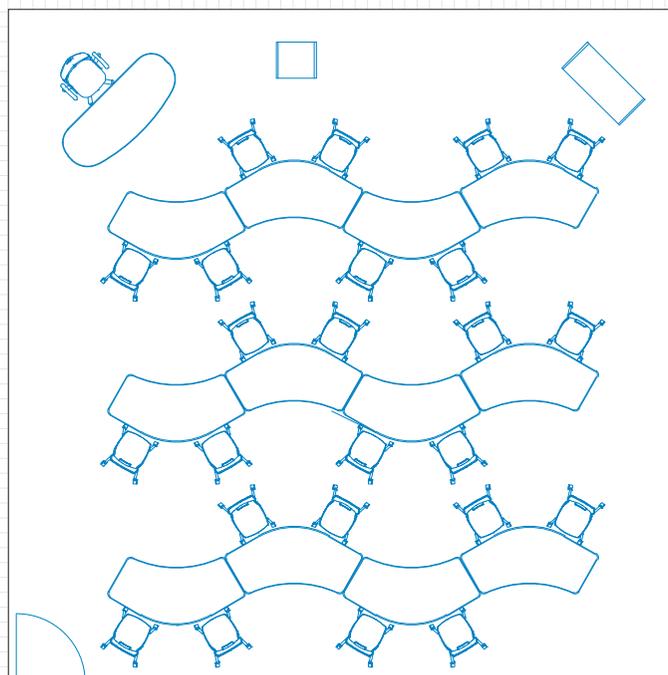
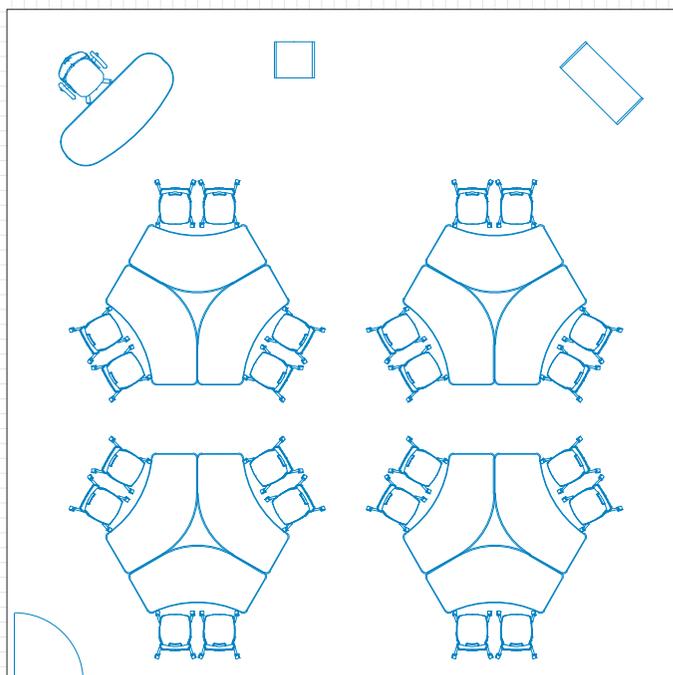
Shown:  
24 Students  
900 sq. ft.

## Ahead of the curve.

UXL™ Crescent Tables provide great functionality and a sense of flair when it comes to laying out a classroom for various lessons. As shown here, they are set up for group work in sixes, individually and pairs. Note how compactly the groups of six fit into the space and how imaginatively these stable, spacious tables can be arranged.



> VIEW UXL CRESCENT DESK



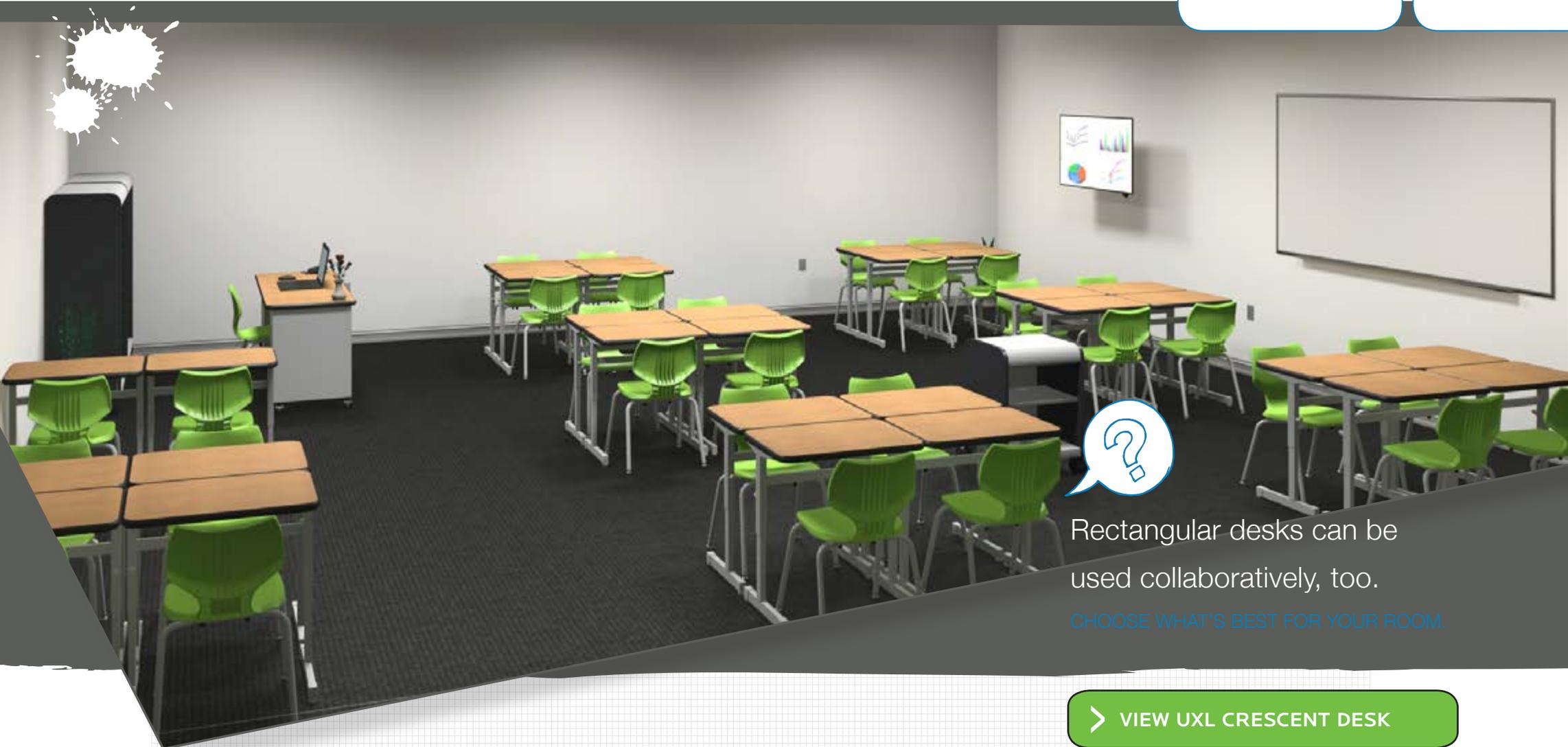
## Room View:

### Silhouette Desks

Shown:  
30 Students  
841 sq. ft.

## Tried and true, the rectangle.

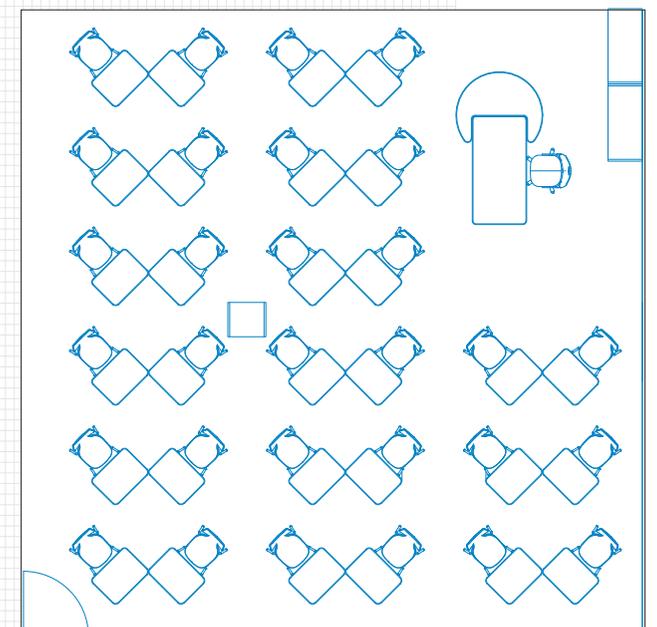
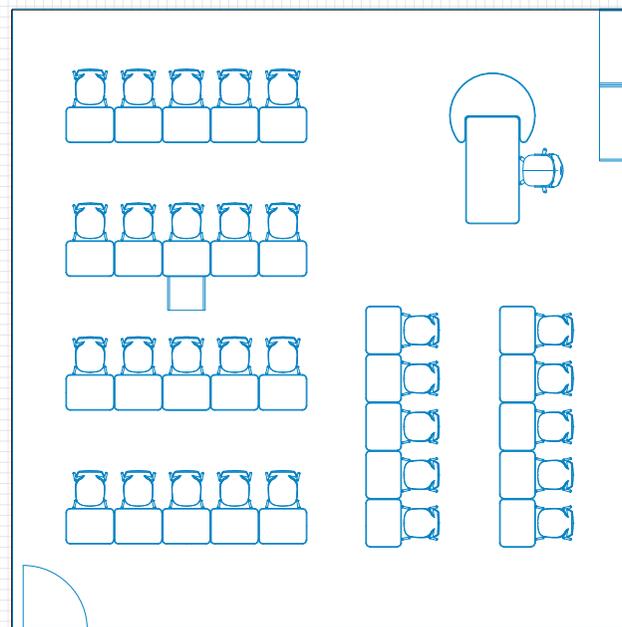
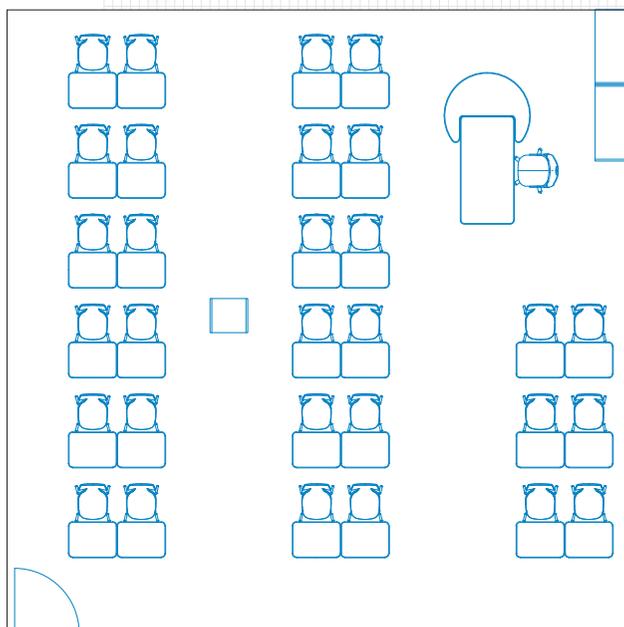
Silhouette Desks offer easy ingress and egress for students which is a significant plus in the active environment of a collaborative classroom. Their large work surfaces allow the desks to be arranged so students can work individually or in groups. Optional casters make them easy to reconfigure throughout the day.



Rectangular desks can be used collaboratively, too.

CHOOSE WHAT'S BEST FOR YOUR ROOM.

> VIEW UXL CRESCENT DESK



## TAKE THIS QUIZ

How much does classroom design affect student learning?

A. 0%

B. 10%

C. 20%

D. 25%

### **The Answer:**

A 2013 pilot study by the University of Salford (England) and architects Nightingale Associates found that the classroom environment can affect a typical child's academic progress by 25% (negative or positive) in one academic year. An additional Salford study reinforced that the most powerful impact is made by the physical design of the particular classroom.



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