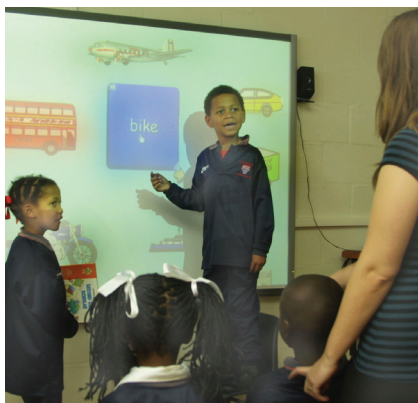


# Capricorn Primary School, Cape Town, South Africa

## Educational technology helps disadvantaged learners catch up



**Teacher Kathryn Cooper captures the attention of learners Lizel Petersen and Robin Veitch.**

*“As a visual method of teaching, the SMART Board interactive whiteboards are exciting and hold the learners’ attention.”*

**Siddieka Hassen**, principal, Capricorn Primary School

Capricorn Primary School is in the heart of an impoverished suburb of Cape Town, South Africa. Previously an informal settlement, the suburb is home to many unemployed people, and the children tend to be two-to-three years behind their contemporaries’ educational level.

Capricorn is funded by the Vrygrond Community Development Trust which, through education, aims to restore the dignity of the children and change their lives.

In 2008 the school opened its 15 classrooms to learners from Grade R to Grade 3. In 2009, 468 learners, ranging in age from 5-to-10 years,

enrolled at the school which extended its curriculum to Grade 4.

While the language medium of the school is English, many of the children come from Afrikaans or isiXhosa speaking homes so teacher assistants help out with translations.

The school’s goal is to for learners, after four years at the school, to be on an educational level appropriate for their age. Educational technology is seen as the key enabler in achieving this.

Since the school falls under the umbrella of the Western Cape Education Department it has been included in the department’s Khanya Technology in Education Project. This initiative was started in 2001 to use technology to address the shortage of teacher capacity at the province’s schools and assist in teaching the curriculum.

At Capricorn Primary School, SMART Board interactive whiteboards were chosen as the most effective tool to develop skills that would equip learners for their future role in a technology-driven society.

Capricorn Primary School has installed 12 SMART Board interactive whiteboards in classrooms from Grade 1 to Grade 4. Other SMART teaching aids include Notebook 10 software, Toolkit, Number Cruncher and SMART Speller.

Intervention programmes, such as Wordworks Basic Concepts are used to help learners make up for lost time in their education. Art, music and chess are included as extra-curricular activities to help the children gain confidence in

expressing themselves and exercising their minds.

School principal Siddieka Hassen says the SMART Board interactive whiteboards have had a significant impact on the children’s confidence and ability to be involved in their own learning.

*“As a visual method of teaching, the interactive whiteboards are exciting and hold the learners’ attention. Because the lessons are participative, they are valuable for disadvantaged learners, since they can answer questions in a non-threatening environment. The lesson presents itself as a self-correcting game.”*

The SMART Board interactive whiteboards help the teachers create innovative lessons that can be saved for repeated use or sharing with colleagues. Time is saved during lesson planning as the resources are easily accessible and there is an endless source of information that can be used to enhance lessons.

*“Our teachers have found the possibilities afforded by the interactive whiteboards are limitless,”* says Hassen. *“Teaching material can be created in a matter of minutes. Lessons can be adapted or created as the need arises.*

*“The interactive whiteboards have proved ideal for group work and lesson introduction where new concepts are explained. For example, the straightforward access to the Earth Beyond visual snippets on the solar system, the galaxy and sun, were most useful in explaining complicated theories.*



**Teacher Kathryn Cooper engages Marsha Williams, Dylan Thomas and other learners in an interactive lesson on weather patterns.**

“The wealth of available material ensures that any shortfall in the teachers’ knowledge will not result in poor information being relayed to the children.”

The interactive whiteboards are also excellent for language development, particularly in the foundation phase. “The handwriting activities, where the arrows guide learners into correct letter formation, and the pre-recorded handwriting lessons, have proved most valuable,” says Hassan.

In particular, she has found that the interactive whiteboards stimulate the children’s interest in phonics and mathematics. “All the activities lend themselves to learner participation and

this, in turn, creates a situation where incidental learning takes place.”

The SMART Board interactive whiteboards have also been put to good use in extra-curricular activities such as chess. Music and other interactive programmes such as CAMI Numeracy, Literacy and Number Crunching have all helped enhance the learning experience.

“Being able to use a computer keyboard helps breakdown the teacher’s fear of using technology and soon they are accessing the Internet for information. Understanding the value of these tools is also teaching the learners to use it responsibly and take care of it.”

Hassen believes that Capricorn Primary School is, thanks to the support of SMART Board interactive technology, on track in bringing its learners up to speed with their peers within the targeted four years.

“It is helping them shed the disadvantage of poverty by equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to take their rightful place in a future of their own making,” she says.

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