

SMART Board® helps students with autism to integrate into regular classrooms

Montserrat I School, Madrid/Spain



The S.T.A.B.L.E. Classroom (special program for autism) teacher working with a student.

The Montserrat I School is a state-subsidised private school of Fundación Hogar del Empleado, which for forty years has based its education on constructivist teaching and project-based learning. The students do not use text books, creating their own study material with the guidance of their teachers. And now with ICT and more specifically SMART Board® interactive whiteboards, this methodology has experienced a considerable qualitative improvement.

Since the academic year 2006/2007 the school has used SMART Board interactive whiteboards in all of its classrooms as well as the laboratory and the IT room. And since 2010/2011 it has been using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard in the Stable Classroom for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders, managed by Aleph-TEA (Free Association for the Personalised Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders).

Lucía García Ontiveros, the Stable Classroom teacher at Montserrat I School, is responsible for the work that the school undertakes together with five students between 8 and 10 years of age. She firmly defends the benefits of new technologies for this type of child.

“Although it is only the first year that we have been using SMART Board interactive whiteboards in the Stable Classroom, the immediate results are highly positive”, explains Lucía. “The students learn more because it is such a visual methodology that they find it appealing, enabling them to learn more quickly and more easily”.

The greatest benefit is that it is tactile. In general, this type of student has coordination problems and the simple action of using their fingers or a tennis ball to trace shapes or to write helps them enormously.

Challenge

The school needed a digital tool that encouraged autistic students to learn faster and easier, removing traditional learning barriers for special needs education.

Solution

A SMART Board® interactive whiteboard was installed in the classrooms in order to increase the participation of autistic students.

Result

Students are more active during the lessons and they cope with the activities easier than with traditional teaching methods. Moreover, they learn abstract concepts easily.

“Before, when we could only work with the computer, the children found it difficult to associate the movement of the mouse with what was happening on the screen”, explains Lucía. “Now, however, they can see that by touching an object with their finger they can move it or place it in the correct spot, which generates a feeling of confidence and strengthens their self-esteem”.

The students are becoming more active and now they are able to complete with better results the exercises that they did before on paper or which were presented on a traditional blackboard. At the same time they are learning concepts such as order and classification and they are reinforcing certain skills.

“It is gratifying to see how the children are able to take any object and put it in their file”, says Lucía. “It seems like magic to them. They think: look, I touch it and it moves where I want it too. This also reinforces mathematical and spatial concepts”.

The use of the SMART Board® interactive whiteboard with the students is completely interactive. “We want the children to participate. This is why we use computer games and resources specifically designed for autistic children,” indicates Lucía. “The whiteboard is rarely used to explain contents”.

The teachers highlight how the SMART Board interactive whiteboard helps these students to integrate into the regular classrooms. The five students attend regular classes in subjects corresponding to their age with children without any disorders. Before, although their classmates helped them, they often found it difficult to follow the pace of the class. Now, they can see that there is a common element, the SMART board interactive whiteboard, which they are familiar with, they know how it works and they want to use it.

“The SMART Board interactive whiteboards is an inclusion tool”, claims Carmen González, coordinator of the Infants School. “Since we have been using the SMART Board in the Stable Classroom, the students know where to focus their attention when they are in the regular classroom and they integrate better in the class. It also enables them to stand up and participate insofar as they are able”.

The success of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard in the school has stimulated the interest of some parents to install one in their homes so that their children may continue working with them at home.

“It is an inclusion tool for when the student leaves the Stable Classroom and enters the regular classroom, because having already used the SMART Board in the S.T.A.B.L.E. Classroom he or she is able to participate and will not get left behind.”

Carmen González Camacho, coordinator of the Infants school.

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is a leading provider of collaboration solutions that change the way the world works and learns. As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, our focus is on developing a variety of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, making collaboration and learning with digital resources more natural. Our products have transformed teaching and learning in more than two million classrooms worldwide, reaching over 40 million students and their teachers. In business, our Freestorm™ visual collaboration solutions improve the way that people work and collaborate, enabling them to be more productive and reduce costs.

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