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- Cathy McDonald,
school-based technology specialist

Flexibility for teachers translates into personalized learning for students

Cathy McDonald knows a technophobe when she sees one. And she knows how to convert one into a techno-whiz. McDonald has been working in technology integration for ten years and her job has never been easier. Greenbriar West in Fairfax County, Virginia, has recently installed user-friendly SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards in most classrooms, and many of them are complemented by SMART's AirLiner™ wireless slates, which allow remote control of the interactive whiteboard.

“The wireless slates have caught on like wildfire,” says McDonald. “I have self-proclaimed technophobes who have embraced SMART's technology products. They're going gang-busters. Now their kids are engaged and are remembering more of what they've been taught.” As they have recognized the potential of SMART products to inspire students and help diversify teaching styles, teachers at Greenbriar West have become motivated to integrate SMART products into their classrooms.

Greenbriar West teachers are deeply committed to providing innovative education solutions, and they rely on SMART Board interactive whiteboards and AirLiner wireless slates to implement these solutions. “Kids learn better,” McDonald explains, “and retain what they've learned when their lessons are rich with visual

images and graphic organizers. Instead of just receiving information in a lecture format, our kids are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge.”

McDonald has found that the AirLiner wireless slate, when paired with a SMART Board interactive whiteboard, helps teachers break down the traditional barriers of teacher-student dynamics. They are no longer tied to the front of the room by a stationary mouse or podium. Teachers can circulate through the class, controlling the interactive whiteboard with the Airliner wireless slate. This mobility allows a teacher to assume the role of coach or guide, rather than lecturer. “It opens up my classroom,” says teacher Susanna Darter. “In the primary grades, it's essential to move around and see what each student is doing – they're all on such different levels. It gives me a much better picture of their work and how they're doing individually.” Lessons become more spontaneous and teachers can respond to students' needs and questions while the class progresses.

As teachers walk among the students, they can stop to assist those who need extra help. When a teacher writes an explanatory note on the AirLiner wireless slate, it appears simultaneously on the interactive whiteboard, and a concept

Challenge

To create a student-based environment that facilitates personalized learning

SMART solution

AirLiner wireless slates and SMART Board interactive whiteboards

Case result

Teachers have increased flexibility and students are engaged in learning

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Greenbriar West Elementary School

Fairfax, Virginia



"I have self-proclaimed technophobes at the school, and they have embraced SMART's technology products."

becomes clearer. By passing the student a wireless slate, teachers quickly find out whether the concept is understood, without leaving the student's side.

Because not every student is comfortable leaving the desk to demonstrate knowledge, Susanna Darter depends on her AirLiner wireless slate to involve more introverted children. "There are some students who are shy," she explains, "and they prefer to stand back and do it from their seat, or tell me what to do."

Being more actively involved with students at their desks can also help teachers with classroom management. "With the wireless slate, I can stand right by students who are chatting," says Susanna Darter. "This way I can control the situation without bringing attention to the child."

SMART products have been incorporated into countless aspects of Greenbriar West curriculum, from math to physical education to art. Art teacher Nancy Kocen uses her SMART Board interactive whiteboard and AirLiner wireless slate in innovative ways, making her classes highly visual and interactive.

Smiley faces and Cézanne do not often appear together on an interactive whiteboard screen, but Kocen brings them together with a sense of play that leaves kids wanting more of the Impressionist Masters. Of the many multimedia

programs Kocen teaches, the still life lesson is a class favorite. The objective is to create a composition from an interesting point of view, then use drawing techniques to shadow and highlight the objects, creating the illusion of depth. With a Cézanne still life looming large on the screen, Kocen's students come to the interactive whiteboard and demonstrate their knowledge of shading versus highlighting using the highlighter tool. Instead of neon colors, they can choose images such as smiley faces, flowers or rainbows. Kocen says, "The kids get such a kick out of highlighting with smiley faces all over this famous man's fruit."

Kocen is also able to "spot" her students as they use the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Using her AirLiner wireless slate, Kocen guides small fingers as they construct human shapes with circles and cylinders. Students enjoy the satisfaction of completing the exercise perfectly, and the class moves along at an appropriate pace.

Through side-by-side coaching, playful innovation and highly visual presentation, Greenbriar West teachers are employing SMART products to engage their students. "This generation has grown up on visual auditory information," says Cathy McDonald, "and that's their preferred learning style." Whether they are technophobes or techno-whizzes, the teachers of Greenbriar recognize their new SMART tools as vital to teaching in the 21st century.

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in user-friendly interactive whiteboards and group collaboration tools. SMART products include the award-winning family of SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards, interactive pen displays, wireless slates and software products. Every day, educators around the world use SMART products to help create engaging 21st-century learning environments. From kindergarten to university, SMART products create media-rich classrooms that help increase student motivation and enhance learning.

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