

Glen Tay School is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 elementary school located just outside of Perth, Ontario - about an hour from Ottawa. It is a rural school of about 220 students. The school is one of two schools in the Board chosen to be a Smart Inclusion school.



HEATHER SNIDER has 25 years of experience teaching Kindergarten, Grade 2 and Grade 3 and has her primary and reading specialist qualifications. She is one of Upper Canada District School Board's lead Smart Inclusion teachers and her work in the area of inclusion has been shared internationally.

TANIA MASON is a teacher presently working as a Student Engagement Teacher (SET) supporting the Perth Family of Schools at the Upper Canada District School Board, working with teachers and students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Tania has previously worked as a classroom teacher and Learning Resource Coach, with additional qualifications in Reading Recovery and Computers in the Classroom, and is a specialist in Special Education. Tania is one of UCDSB's lead Smart Inclusion teachers and has presented both in Canada and the United States on the topic of inclusion.

ALEX DUNN is a Speech-Language Pathologist for the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB), located in Oxford Mills, Ontario. She has been devoted over the last 16 years to exploring creative service delivery models to ensure ALL students, including those with severe communication challenges, achieve the goal of meaningful educational and social participation. Most recently, Alex has spearheaded the creation of Smart Inclusion, an initiative that combines assistive technology with emerging technology and pedagogy to support inclusion – making the impossible possible for ALL students. Alex has shared her passion for the inclusion of ALL students across Canada, United States, UK, Spain, Germany and Puerto Rico and has just been named the Smart Exemplary Educator of the Year for 2012.

Smart Inclusion

Breaking News



Lights, camera, action! "Glen Tay Kids News" flashes across the screen as the news anchor takes her place and prepares to greet the students at Glen Tay Public School in Perth, Ontario, Canada. Instead of listening to the announcements over the PA system that morning, students in every classroom tune into their SMART Board to watch the local news. Students in the Grade 3/4 class report on school activities and events that occurred that month. Reporters share news about winter carnival, basketball teams, science experiments, birthdays and weather. A previously recorded interview and a recycling commercial are also included. It is a very exciting climax to an extensive literacy project.

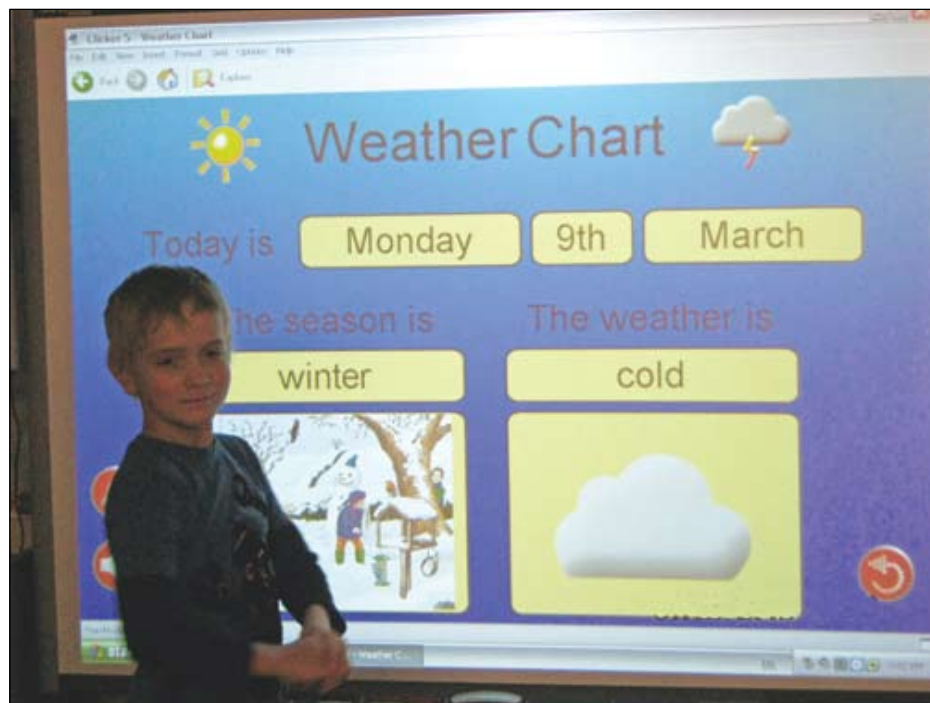
Smart Inclusion, which has become an integral part of programming at Glen Tay Public School, began four years ago when the team at the Upper Canada District School Board was challenged to include 12 students with the most severe needs into general education and system classrooms throughout the district. The team consisted of speech language pathologists, student engagement teachers, learning consultants, IT consultants and all those teachers, educational assistants and principals who were part of the Smart Inclusion team. Smart Inclusion involves using a Universal Design for Learning Toolkit, including SMART Boards and other SMART Solutions (SMART Table, SMART Document

Camera, SMART Response, SMART Sync [www.smarttech.com]), iPads (www.apple.com), Nintendo DSi (http://nintendods.com) and traditional teaching tools with what has historically been thought of as "special needs hardware and software." The tools are set within a framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Aided Language Stimulation and the Participation Model (PM) to support (1) communication and participation for students with significant communication disabilities and (2) inclusive educational programming. As educators, we try to improve our skills and teaching practices while refining our use of technology to meet the needs of all learners in

the classroom. We make every effort to step out of the way of our students by turning the technology over to them more often, giving them the opportunity to collaborate and create. We have challenged ourselves to create projects that will offer students opportunities to learn and produce work that has real purpose and an authentic audience. We also continue to look for innovative ways to use technology in the classroom to both engage students and find ways to accommodate their needs.

Collaborative inquiries involving the classroom teacher, learning resource coach (LRC) and the school principal provide an effective platform for planning. It was during one of these planning sessions that the idea of a newscast came about. The classroom teacher informed the group that the next comprehension strategy this Grade 3/4 class was going to be focusing on was questioning. The basic elements of lessons that would be taught during shared reading, read-aloud and guided reading were drafted but, before specifics were ironed out, the team wanted to decide what the culminating task would look like. Keeping authenticity in mind and giving the students a purpose for learning effective questioning techniques, the notion of conducting interviews emerged. Connecting this to a real-life situation, the group naturally thought of news reporters and the role they play in broadcasting the news. Applying these ideas to a classroom-based project would surely have a strong engagement factor, but what about the student with severe apraxia? How would they participate alongside the other students? Through the fusion of constructive collaboration, Universal Design for Learning, Aided Language Stimulation and the Participation Model, the team of educators envisioned a full-blown newscast in which ALL of the students would be involved. The project was set to move forward.

One of the first whole-group lessons the teacher planned was brainstorming a list of words that a person can use to start a question. The list was surprisingly extensive and lead directly into a subsequent lesson on the difference between thick and thin questions. Thick questions are those that have a complex answer and may require some research or high-level thinking in order to respond to. Thin questions, on the other hand, can be answered briefly with little detail or thought involved. Both types of questions were modeled by the teacher during read-aloud, and then, during guided reading, students were asked to share questions that came to mind while gaining



meaning from the text they were reading. These questions were recorded in a word processing document, then sorted during SMART Board and SMART Table activities into the categories of thick and thin questions. Once students showed competence with this reading strategy, their next task was to write and answer thick and thin questions as part of their reading response activities.

Soon afterwards, the newscast project was announced, which, of course, stirred up a great deal of excitement. Web-based examples of other newscasts produced by elementary students provided a model for this class to go by. Kidspiration (<http://www.inspiration.com/Kidspiration>) was an effective tool for recording aspects of a news broadcast and creating an organizational web of tasks that the children would perform themselves. Dividing into small groups, the children set out writing reports, creating background scenes, researching topics and preparing questions that could be asked during one of the school interviews.

Media literacy was an obvious curricular link, too, so a study of commercials ensued. The purpose and intended audience was examined through a homework assignment whereby the students and parents were asked to record the type of commercials that were shown during both a children's program and a news broadcast. Comparisons were made and characteristics noted. One group of students was then responsible for creating a commercial that would be appropriate for our newscast audience –

the student body. This advertising team set about using SMART Notebook for graphics, text, animations and sound in order to create an impressive commercial about recycling in our school.

Other students prepared scripts they would later read while reporting news from their angle. Learning effective research and summarization skills was also a necessary step in this process. These skills included gathering information from internet sources, conducting live interviews with staff and students in our school and recording them with the iPad2. Interviewing the basketball coach, for instance, provided the necessary facts and background information for the sports report. Getting a list of students' birthdays for the month allowed a group to develop an interactive SMART Notebook page of birthday wishes. To add some creative flair, backgrounds were made using graphics and creative tools, photographs of school activities were imported and music was added to introduce the news. There was no doubt that these students were reading and writing for a purpose every day.

Incorporated into this elaborate plan and every plan is, of course, inclusion. All activities need to be in the reach of all students. The Participation Model Matrix (PMM) (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998) was completed at the beginning of the year with all team members (including, but not limited to, teachers, principals, educational assistants, parents, speech language pathologist, audiologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, physician and

consultants, depending on the student's needs) providing opinions and input around where students with special needs are starting from and gathering all pertinent information together for goal setting. Through this method, the team agrees on a small number of goals in the area of inclusion, participation and/or independence as a point of focus for a specified period of time for a given student. In this case, one of the student's goals was to become more independent during the literacy block.

Once the goal is established, the Activity Standards Inventory (ASI) (Beukelman & Mirenda, 1998) is the piece that takes the goal and, by comparing the target student to a peer, identifies environmental and student barriers to participation in order to design interventions and promote independence and successful participation. (Forms used and a case study example that reviews the Participation Model and how to complete the PMM and ASI can be found at: <http://smartinclusion.wikispaces.com/Smart+Inclusion+Pedagogy>.)

As a team, we identified that the special needs student in the class lacked the communication skills that would allow him to participate in the newscast in the same way as the other children – but he

needed to be involved, just like everyone else. Through some careful consideration and planning, we decided that this student would be responsible for reporting the weather, a topic he could easily relate to. Working alongside the rest of the class, he created a page in Clicker 5 (www.cricksoft.com) that would tell the date, the season and the kind of weather we were experiencing that day. With a touch of the screen, the words he wanted to say came out loud and clear. The look of satisfaction on his face was immeasurable. And to make it even more meaningful for this student, he drew a picture of himself using the tools in SMART Notebook and used images of clothing to dress himself appropriately, according to the weather. Now he had his own segment in the broadcast. What a proud moment!

Our debut performance was almost ready. The final step was to make sure the technological elements were looked after. Sharing images on multiple SMART Boards was a new venture for all of us, but where would we be without opportunities to grow. On the day of the broadcast, the set was a complicated array of equipment, cords and lights. One laptop ran the SMART Notebook pages of background



pictures that would appear behind the news reporters. Another laptop worked as a teleprompter so the reporters could read their scripts. A third laptop used a microphone and document camera to provide the lighting and sound and pushed the broadcast out to the other SMART Boards in the school, which were connected via Adobe Connect (<http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>).

It all worked. We did it – our own newscast – kid style! Everyone played a part in bringing to life the belief that inclusion really is the key to success for all learners.

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