

Real-Life Professional Development Practices





By Wendy McMahon

Michelle Mandley trains teachers at her school to use **SMART Board interactive whiteboards**. Katie Booth flew to Shanghai, China, to train teachers at an international school. And David Lopez and his colleagues created an online Moodle™ course to help busy teachers find time to participate in professional development sessions for the SMART Board interactive whiteboard.

Although these three educators have different PD roles, they all have a shared passion for helping teachers use the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to its full potential.

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Passionately volunteering

When Michelle Mandley's position as a technology trainer for her district was eliminated because of changes to the Title I program, she moved within her district to [John Hanson Middle School](#) in Waldorf, Maryland, to become a computer teacher. She soon discovered that her new colleagues were in need of support and training for the 11 SMART Board interactive whiteboards at the school, and she gladly volunteered her PD services.

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– **Michelle Mandley**
Computer Teacher
John Hanson Middle School
Waldorf, Maryland

resource for the classroom,” explains Mandley. “Being able to empower the teachers to use something fabulous in their classroom – it's huge.”

With approval from her principal, Mandley started the SMART Club. The club's first offering was a six-week course covering the basics of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and [SMART Notebook collaborative learning software](#). Teachers who took the course could also earn continuing education credits.

Six teachers at the school learned how to create and deliver interactive lessons using particular features, such as hide and reveal or linking, during the PD sessions.



They then worked independently to create more lessons. Mandley has found that this approach is essential for successful PD sessions. “That way, you are learning it, implementing it and then you’re coming back to reassess and to regroup,” she says.

Mandley has also learned that it’s important for teachers to leave PD sessions with something useful. “As a teacher, when we have staff development, the biggest complaint is ‘I didn’t need that’ or ‘I already know that.’ So when they’re leaving with something in their hand they can open the next day and use, that’s a huge impact. And then they’re excited to come back the next week and tell me how it went.”

Mandley plans to hold more sessions throughout the school year. Ultimately, she hopes staff from each department will develop the same skill levels with their SMART Board interactive whiteboards, so teachers can share the lessons they’ve created.

Traveling PD

Third-grade teacher Katie Booth at [Kyrene De Los Lagos School](#) in Phoenix, Arizona, hasn’t worked in an official PD role, but because of her proficiency with the SMART Board interactive whiteboard, she provides training sessions after large-scale installations. Her school district has become nationally recognized for its technology integration.

So when the opportunity arose for her to train teachers at [Shanghai Community International School](#), Booth was up to the challenge. Her cousin is a teacher at the international school’s early childhood campus. When she learned that her principal would purchase SMART Board interactive whiteboards for the school’s classrooms if teachers were trained to use them effectively, she asked Booth to visit and provide the training.

When Booth arrived, the school had two SMART Board interactive whiteboards that teachers could sign out during their classes. The sign-out procedure meant some teachers were already familiar with the SMART Board interactive

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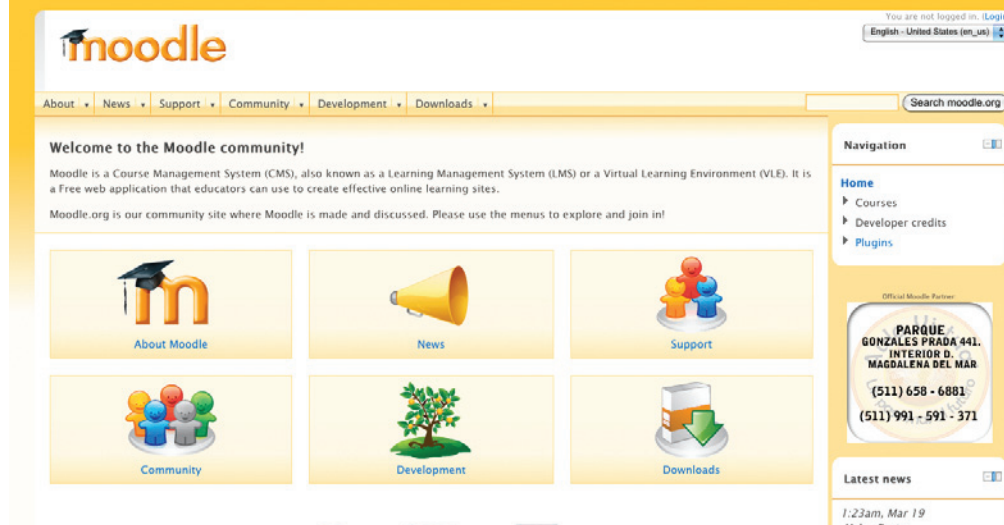
whiteboard, but for most, it was a new experience.

Over four days, Booth gave two one-hour group sessions to 20 teachers. The sessions covered the basics of using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and SMART Notebook software. Staff also signed up for half-hour time slots throughout the week to meet with Booth and discuss the effective use of interactive whiteboards in their classrooms. Finally, teachers could sign up for another half hour with Booth, where she would deliver a sample lesson with the teachers and their students in the school library.

“Each teacher got a half-hour session individually with me, a half-hour session with their class with me, in addition to the whole-class training after school,” Booth says.

She found the approach worked well. And having taught kindergarten for seven years and using a SMART Board interactive whiteboard for five years, she was able to provide teachers with plenty of examples specific to their grade levels.

“Teachers were very positive. They were really engaged and interested. In fact, some said it was the best PD they had received in a long time,” says Booth. “I think what really helped



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District Technology Trainer
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Tampa, Florida

was all of the examples and being able to see right away exactly how they could get going and using it in their classroom.” She says showing teachers how to use lessons that are already created and tweak them for their students also made using the interactive whiteboard in their classrooms seem more manageable.

Booth says the experience showed her that familiarizing yourself with a school site and its particular needs leads to more effective PD for the teachers.

Thanks to Booth’s help, two grade levels at the international school’s early childhood campus are now equipped with SMART Board interactive whiteboards – with more to come.

Meeting teachers’ needs
Hillsborough County Public Schools, the eighth-largest school district in the United States, is fortunate to have a department dedicated to PD for classroom technology. The district’s trainers are extremely knowledgeable about SMART products – in fact, six of the department’s nine staff are **SMART Certified Trainers**.

Two years ago, this Tampa, Florida, school district started using **Moodle**, a free online learning management system, to deliver online PD courses that could fit into teachers’ busy schedules.

“Moodle has definitely given us that extra flexibility that teachers really need,” says David Lopez, a district technology trainer for Hillsborough County Public Schools

and a SMART Exemplary Educator. He says the online platform enables his department to reach a broader audience, because teachers can fit the courses into their particular schedules and learn at their own pace.

They've seen great success with their course about SMART Board interactive whiteboards, which helps busy teachers get started using them. Lopez says this course is important to his district – it is still buying SMART Board interactive whiteboards, so teachers need to hit the ground running.

Developed specifically for the Moodle environment, the course involves 30 hours of work over a minimum eight-week period. Teachers learn how to use the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and SMART Notebook software, along with how to create lessons and activities. They also learn tips and tricks, gain access to SMART resources, complete assignments and quizzes, and learn about the [SMART Exchange website](#).

Lopez's colleague, Janet Ritchie, says the Moodle environment is ideal for this type of course because it enables trainers to go into more detail without overwhelming participants. Unlike face-to-face sessions where time is restricted, online courses give trainers and teachers the time to do more.

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“I can go into more depth on the content because it's self-paced and not a managed course,” says Ritchie. “Teachers can take their time going through the material, experiencing what they've learned with their [SMART] Boards and then going on to the next step.”

Lopez says Moodle is a great free resource for schools because it is user friendly and simply requires a public server for installation. However, he warns that online courses are a different way of learning. “You can't just take a face-to-face course and put it online. You can't just copy your materials and stick them in a PDF file and put them online.”

“You have to break down the content so they learn it chunk by chunk,” explains Ritchie. “Then provide time to practice with that content. They have to do something with it so they can really learn.”

Lopez has found that developing online courses requires a

constructivist approach.

Participants not only need to interact with the activities but also with their fellow participants – he suggests forums, blogs or wikis. And, of course, facilitators must be available to answer questions via e-mail and to participate in the forums or blogs.

Although there is a learning curve for developing online courses, both Ritchie and Lopez say Hillsborough's online courses have helped them reach a broader audience.

Lopez and his colleagues are about to offer the course about SMART Board interactive whiteboards for the eighth time, and, as always, the 30 spots are filling up quickly. Lopez says he and the rest of the district technology training team will continue to offer this course and to develop others like it so that even more teachers can experience the benefits of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard.