

SMART Showcase School Profile

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Engaging Learners at Tedder Elementary

By Heather Ellwood

At **Tedder Elementary**, even the youngest learners are technology veterans. From prekindergarten to the fifth grade, the students at this SMART Showcase School have mastered the use of the latest classroom technology products to help them better tackle content and curriculum. One of 139 elementary schools in Broward County Public School District in Florida, Tedder Elementary is a model for the many ways technology can raise levels of student interest, excitement and engagement.

The school's forward-looking philosophy, explains Ronette Yarbrough, Tedder's instructional technology specialist, begins with leadership. Tedder has an overarching commitment to enhancing learning and instruction with the best educational technology available. This dedication begins in principal Camille Pontillo's office and works its way through the corridors of Tedder, touching every staff member.

Since 1999, the school has been committed not just to technology but to products from SMART. Every Tedder learning space, even the gymnasium and music room, is outfitted with easy-to-use and student-friendly SMART products, including the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard, AirLiner™ wireless slate (now called SMART Slate), SMART Response interactive response system and SMART Document Camera. The school cafeteria is also outfitted with a SMART Podium interactive pen display. The halls of Tedder Elementary, says Yarbrough, are filled with the energy that comes from putting the engagement of the student front and center in these digital classrooms.

"Everything we do in every classroom, from pre-K classes to the fifth grade, revolves around technology. We call ourselves a 21st-century school with 21st-century digital classrooms," says Yarbrough, who oversees all the technology used at the 791-student school.

Increasing achievement levels

Christina Biscaha, Tedder's preschool team lead, says that the school's prekindergarten students are immediately exposed to hands-on digital learning experiences and activities on the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. "The activities our pre-K students do, in math, reading and science, coincide with our pre-K curriculum. Doing these activities provides reinforcement for all the students' academic needs," she explains. Since the SMART Board and other SMART products were introduced into Biscaha's prekindergarten classroom, along with commercial interactive reading software that the students use on the board, she has seen "an improvement of letter and number recognition, as well as increased scores in reading comprehension." The entire early education team at Tedder believes that by giving the youngest learners a strong foundation in using classroom technology, they will build and develop their skills as they progress through the grades.

The school's focus on enhancing curriculum with interactive digital resources that increase student engagement has paid off at all grade levels. Tedder Elementary was awarded an A grade on the 2008–2009 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test®. "I think our data really shows that our students are improving when it comes to grade level achievement of the core subjects. We believe it's because our students are more interested in what's happening in the classroom. They're paying attention, and they're more involved," says Yarbrough. She adds that Tedder teachers are careful to reinforce content and curriculum with interactive lessons that make the most of the technology resources they have – which are also integral to the students' rising achievement levels.



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Ronette Yarbrough

Instructional Technology Specialist
Tedder Elementary
Pompano Beach, Florida



If you would like to visit Tedder Elementary to talk with educators about their success and see firsthand how they're putting SMART products to work, visit the [SMART Showcase School](#) section of our education website. From this page, you can also find a [Showcase School or District in your area](#).

Sharing resources

Like educators in all SMART Showcase Schools, the Tedder teachers don't keep their resources and ideas a secret. Yarbrough and other staff members have started a Broward County SMART User Group. Calling themselves the SMART Bugs, the group holds monthly meetings where teachers from around the district get together to share user tips, lesson ideas and resources. Tedder teachers also engage in weekly school-based professional development, sharing content and ways to enrich the curriculum with technology.

The Tedder faculty see a particular importance in sharing their expertise with each other because of the unique makeup of the school's student body. Many students at Tedder come from economically disenfranchised families – 90 percent are eligible for a free or reduced-fee lunch – so they don't necessarily have ready access to technology in their homes. With the help of SMART products, the teachers incorporate many types of interactive learning into their teaching, and then they share what they have developed. By working together, all teachers have the resources to give students enriched opportunities to learn with technology, opportunities they might not otherwise have, explains Yarbrough.

Beginning with the first day of prekindergarten, learning at Tedder is hands-on and technology enabled. "Because our school is able to utilize SMART products, we are allowing our students to achieve more goals," says Yarbrough. "The students have shown great interest in the technology, and with every new product we add, they become more and more involved in learning." **EC**

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