

SMART Showcase School Profile

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Passionate Teaching Abounds at Thomas Edison School

By Kim Hamill

Thomas Edison once said that what you are will show in what you do. If it wasn't for a time difference of 80 years, he could very well have been speaking about the educators at one of his namesake schools in Illinois.

Located in the small village of Morton Grove, [Thomas Edison School](#) is made up of a group of passionate elementary educators who are devoted to creating and fostering an environment of collaboration, positive learning opportunities and engagement for a language-diverse student body.

And with SMART products, they've found the right tools to help them achieve their goals.

Speaking the language of learning

Thomas Edison School, which became a SMART Showcase School last summer, is part of Skokie/Morton Grove District 69 and has approximately 500 students in grades three to five. Many are English language learners (ELL), representing 13 different languages including Spanish, Urdu and Tagalog.

Keith Shaffer, the school district's director of technology, says that SMART products help Thomas Edison teachers break down the language barrier by making lessons more visual and interactive. ELL teacher Shab Sarrafi has experienced this firsthand.

"The SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard allows me to individualize learning for a variety of learning styles and needs. The use of the SMART Board also promotes equal opportunity in the classroom and increases cooperation and confidence. Students feel more comfortable practicing their oral language because they want to be involved in the lesson. I have noticed an increase in student participation during SMART lessons," says Sarrafi.

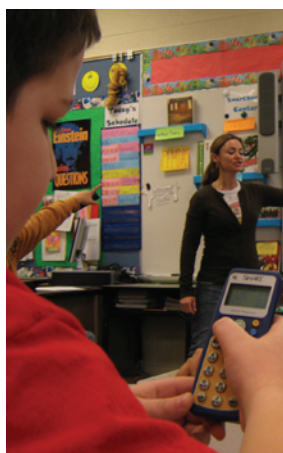
Increased participation is not limited to ELL students – fifth-grade teacher Julie Anderson says that SMART products help her meet the needs of every student. "My students are definitely more motivated to learn in a technology-rich classroom. They understand technology and see it as a natural part of their world. The use of SMART products allows me to connect learning to life more easily for the students I teach. I'm so grateful I have access to this technology. I truly do not know what I would do without it."

Seeing mistakes as learning opportunities

Anderson team-teaches fifth-grade math with Brooke Halpin. Both started using the SMART Response™ interactive response system to collect data that would inform their math instruction. But after seeing the reaction of their students to SMART Response, their reasons for using this assessment tool evolved.

"Immediately, we saw how powerful the collection of formative assessment data could be as an instructional tool. However, we quickly learned that this data could be a powerful learning tool for our students as well," Anderson says.

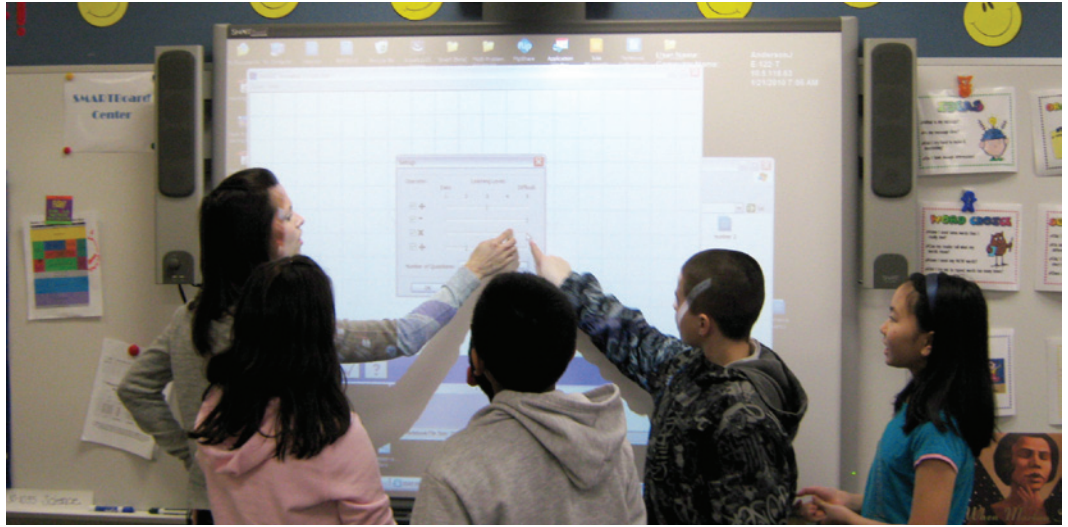
When Anderson and Halpin share the anonymous results of math quizzes with their class, students recognize where mistakes are being made and work together to analyze why. "The focus on reviewing the results provided through SMART Response and displayed on the SMART Board interactive



"I really feel that SMART has revolutionized my teaching. I am a much more thoughtful and purposeful planner now. I love seeing the increased student motivation and excitement and all the 'aha!' moments that now happen in my room.... Creating the lessons and using the software is engaging and fun for me, so I enjoy my job now more than ever!"

Brooke Halpin

Fifth-Grade Teacher
Thomas Edison School
Morton Grove, Illinois



If you would like to visit Thomas Edison School 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.

whiteboard helped to foster a collaborative learning environment, in which students see their mistakes as learning opportunities and work together to help everyone understand the concept being assessed," Anderson says.

Halpin and Anderson now use SMART Response for assessment throughout their lessons – Anderson says that her fifth-grade students "love to see and celebrate the growth that they make from pretest to posttest."

Principal Joseph Hailpern adds that the addition of the SMART Response interactive response system has changed how teachers use their time. "Instead of spending a great deal of time hand grading an assessment to give back to students, teachers spend their time designing assessments that work with SMART Response to give students immediate feedback while the learning is taking place. This fosters a reflective learning atmosphere and emphasizes students recognizing their miscues and successes on individual items rather than an overall score from a previous day's lesson," Hailpern says.

Sharing effective lesson design

Professional development plays a big role in the success of SMART products at Thomas Edison. All teachers who have SMART Board interactive whiteboards in their classrooms participate in an all-day workshop, and the district offers additional workshops that cater to novice and advanced SMART product users.

According to Anderson, these professional development opportunities aren't just about learning how to use a product – they are also about tying technology to instructional outcomes. "We work hard to make sure that we are using the technology in a way that truly enhances the lessons for our students, and that we aren't just using technology for technology's sake."

One way Thomas Edison teachers do this is by sharing effective practices for designing lessons using SMART Notebook™ collaborative learning software. Halpin is one of the teachers leading lesson design development. "We show teachers how to begin planning with focused objectives and an objective-based assessment using SMART Response. Then we take them step by step from introduction of topics to adding interactivity to differentiation, focusing on the organization of the lesson using slides and groups," Halpin says.

Proving that good education requires good educators

As Anderson says, Thomas Edison School uses SMART products not just to employ the latest technology, but to make learning more interactive, understandable and empowering for students.

Shaffer agrees. "No technology is a cure for a bad lesson or a poorly prepared teacher. However, in the hands of an innovative and prepared teacher, technology can be an amazing instructional and exploratory tool that promotes collaborative learning and a high level of student engagement."

That's exactly what Thomas Edison educators are doing with SMART products. By providing an amazing education to their students, these incredible teachers are proving Thomas Edison's point – that what you are will show in what you do. **EC**

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