

SMART Showcase School Profile

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Learning to Learn with Technology at the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division

By **Jane Chamberlin Grove**

There's a big difference between knowing how to surf the Internet and knowing how to use technology to learn. Students in the [Saskatchewan Rivers School Division](#) are growing up with a real-world aptitude for technology, thanks to coaches and teachers who use SMART Notebook™ collaborative learning software.

Saskatchewan Rivers is a SMART Showcase School District, and Sheri Gunville, integrated learning consultant, is one of the driving forces behind the division's philosophy on technology. Gunville is dedicated to weaving technology into the curriculum so that students view products like laptop computers and SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards as tools to learn.

"This way we can get kids to understand that a laptop is for use in classrooms doing work, in language arts for example, not a free-time tool for surfing the Web individually in a lab," says Gunville. "Notebook software has been instrumental in getting that message across."

Many of the schools in the division have access to laptops, and SMART Notebook software is installed on every one. And SMART Board interactive whiteboards – all with SMART Notebook – are in all 33 of the division's schools. As a result, SMART Notebook software is an integral part of life at Saskatchewan Rivers. Consultants use the software to present at teacher in-service sessions across subject areas. And teachers with SMART Board interactive whiteboards in their classrooms use the software to create 99 percent of their lessons. Students use it too, for review and presentations. Teachers' lesson activities are shared on one drive, and students have a different drive for accessing the activities and handing in assignments.

Literacy comes early

Kristen Pawliw is one of the division's teachers who finds SMART Notebook indispensable. She teaches second grade at Princess Margaret School, and one aspect of learning she focuses on is early literacy. "Notebook software makes learning so engaging for the students," she says. "Teaching phonemic awareness with Notebook software is really amazing. Lessons can be modeled as a full class, then used individually or in groups later on, which wouldn't be possible without the software. They really enjoy the animations and different links, and you can pull everything together holistically with Notebook."

One of Pawliw's favorite lessons involves projectable books. She creates storyboards on SMART Notebook that students read out loud and record. "The students know how to pull up a story and pull up the SMART Recorder. They read into a laptop or headset and record it, then save it onto their desktop. So I can go home at night and do a reading record for several students who worked on that center that day."

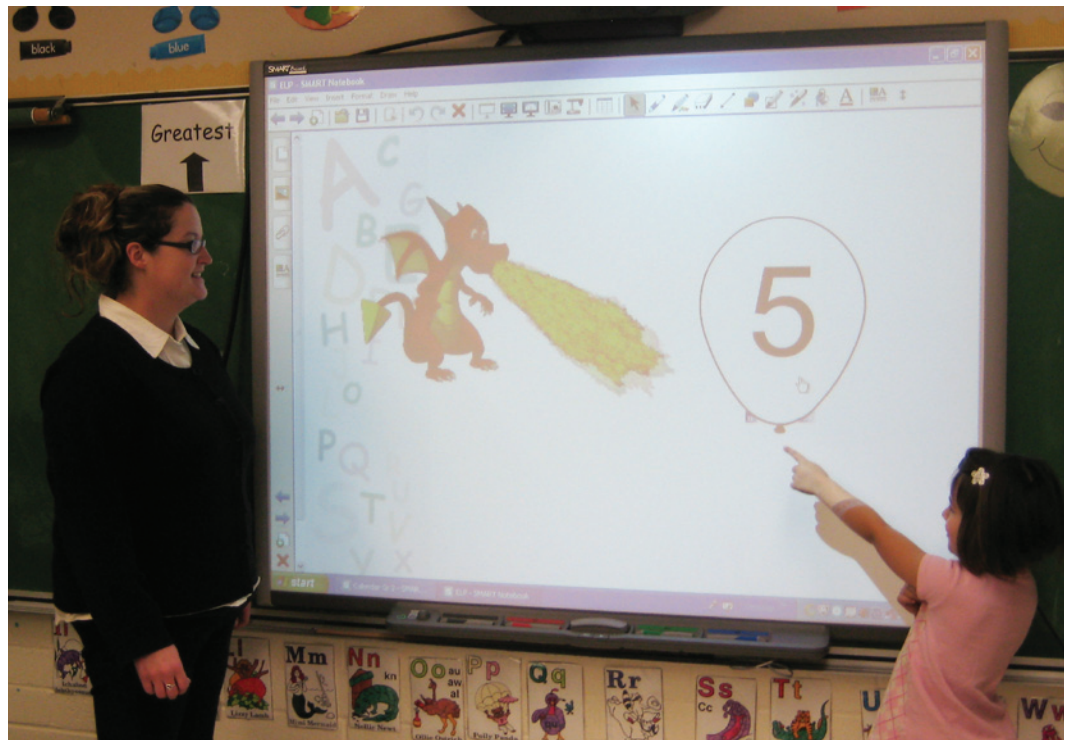
What does Pawliw like so much about this activity? "It combines technology with literacy," she explains. "It's good for the teacher because it's nice to have a recording of students' voices to show parents at interview time what level their child is reading at. I also use it to do running records for assessment."



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Sheri Gunville

Integrated Learning Consultant
Saskatchewan Rivers School Division



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SMART Notebook lessons like this one also help Pawliw teach more efficiently. "The best part is that the following year you can go in and use the lesson again, which saves you time. And you can add to it because you've gained knowledge about the software during that year."

Pawliw isn't the only one benefitting from the storyboard lesson, of course. "The kids love it," she says. "They present it in front of the class on the board, and they enjoy the ownership of it. It also helps with fluency and developing expression as they read."

Understanding comes more easily

SMART Notebook software has also been instrumental in helping Saskatchewan Rivers teachers implement the Understanding by Design (UbD) instructional model. Because UbD focuses on the importance of understanding in all its potential facets, it's important to use tools that help all students connect with the curriculum.

Technology coach Stacey Monette has found that SMART Notebook software is exactly the kind of tool she needs. "We want technology to enhance the lessons and make them better," she explains. "It shouldn't just be an add-on." This philosophy is evidenced by the way Monette builds technology into her UbD strategies. "Once we've come up with the key concepts, essential questions and performance tasks, then we start planning all of our lessons using Notebook software."

Part of her process involves ensuring that lessons address all students' needs. "Differentiation in our lessons helps achieve UbD goals," explains Monette. "You can have one lesson for all students – it can include more challenging activities for some students and additional support for those who are struggling. When kids are working on the Notebook file, I have buttons that say, 'Are you struggling?' And they can jump to extra support materials." With this kind of differentiation, it's easier to help students come to a deep understanding of concepts.

Educators like Gunville, Pawliw and Monette have made technology products like the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and SMART Notebook software integral to the classrooms of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. Interactive, multimedia lessons are a living and breathing part of the curriculum and structure of each school. It's a structure that's bound to help students find success in a world where technology is part of almost every cubicle, office and boardroom in North America. **EC**

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