

SMART Showcase School

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Digital Curriculum Leads to Sustained Student Engagement at Irons Middle School

By **Stacy Kindopp**

The backpacks of students at [Irons Middle School](#) are no longer filled with heavy textbooks. This year, the school has implemented [CSCOPE®](#) – an online curriculum system developed by the Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative.

It's been a priority for the Lubbock Independent School District to provide students with "a quality, technology-infused education to maximize learning." And, teachers at Irons Middle School have embraced this philosophy and are dedicated to incorporating educational technology in every subject area.

[SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards](#) and [SMART Notebook™ collaborative learning software](#) play an instrumental part in the execution of this philosophy. Teachers are encouraged to develop interactive lessons, and the district offers a reward system for teachers who share high-quality digital lessons.

Jessica Quap, who teaches sixth- and seventh-grade English, now finds SMART Notebook software indispensable after the school's shift to the CSCOPE curriculum. "CSCOPE is rigorous and fast-paced," she explains. "The lessons are also very creative and complement the interactive whiteboard. I have all of my lesson materials in a single SMART Notebook file, which streamlines my lesson delivery and gives me extra time to share bonus material that supplements the curriculum."



"This interactive approach keeps them engaged, happy and more willing to work. And when students have a positive outlook, it helps them perform better."

Jennifer Gaona

Eighth-Grade Teacher
Irons Middle School
Lubbock, Texas

Variety is the key to engagement

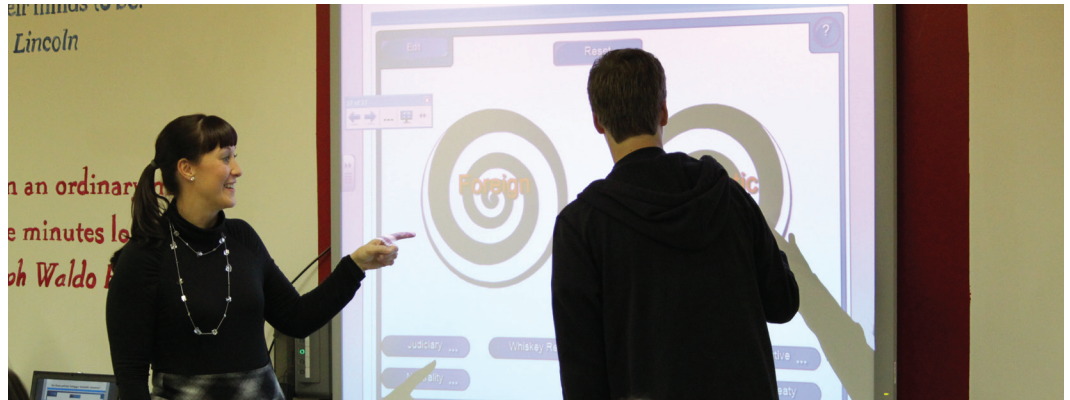
Teachers at Irons Middle School are conscious of meeting every student's needs, so they pack their lessons with diverse activities that capitalize on the strengths of all learners.

Quap says that the dynamic, interactive lessons are having a positive effect on her students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. "Now they stay focused, behavior problems are reduced and I have sustained engagement – which is amazing. When we're doing a learning game or activity that is new, every student is 100 percent plugged in."

Eighth-grade American history teacher Jennifer Gaona agrees that interactive lessons create a positive learning atmosphere. "Many of my students are tactile and visual learners who can't sit still. These students will be moving no matter what, so if I can keep them moving in a way that keeps their focus on the lesson, they will feel successful," she says. "This interactive approach keeps them engaged, happy and more willing to work. And when students have a positive outlook, it helps them perform better."

When planning her lessons, Gaona integrates activities that meet each type of learning style. "I mix up how I'm engaging them daily and, hopefully, in a three-day span, I'll have touched on their multiple intelligences and leveraged each of their strengths so that they are retaining more information."

The teachers say they find it easy to locate activities and movie clips from all subject areas in the Gallery in SMART Notebook software. "I also love using the [SMART Exchange™](#)," says Gaona. "Why reinvent the wheel if someone has already created a great lesson? It's also a good resource for discovering new ideas on how to use SMART Notebook software interactively."



If you would like to visit Irons Middle 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.

The teachers also incorporate other SMART products into their lessons. Gaona frequently assesses student learning with the [SMART Response™ interactive response system](#). "I know this sounds crazy, but when you put a clicker in the students' hands, they're almost excited to take a test," she says.

LaRae Boucher, who teaches eighth-grade math, uses the [SMART Slate™ wireless slate](#) in her classroom to involve students from their desks. "It's fun to pass it around and have a student write the answer to a question. Then, I let that student pick the next person to give it to," describes Boucher. "One time, as a student passed the slate to someone else, he said, 'Here is the tablet of wisdom.' Everyone thought that was very funny, and now that's what we call it – the tablet of wisdom."

Quap says that one of her favorite ways to review lesson materials is by doing something unexpected, such as bringing a Koosh® Ball to class. "In SMART Notebook software, I create a review activity by placing a number of circles on a page. Each circle is linked to another page containing a review question. The students throw the Koosh Ball at the interactive whiteboard, and as the ball hits a circle, the review question appears. They love playing that game!"

Everyone benefits by sharing digital content and ideas

Teachers at Irons Middle School have their own websites, where they post their digital lessons. Boucher says that with the implementation of CSCOPE, parents appreciate having this access even more than in previous years. "Now that students aren't bringing textbooks home with them, parents like to check my class materials online to see what their children are learning," says Boucher.

Because lessons in SMART Notebook software also capture notes taken during class, parents have extra insight into their child's classroom activity. Boucher adds, "It also saves me time because I'm able to keep my notes from year to year."

Boucher says that her digital notes are also useful when students come in for after-school tutoring. "Instead of rewriting my notes up on the interactive whiteboard, I can pull up the exact materials that we went over in class. And, for additional reinforcement, they can access the lesson online from home."

At Irons Middle School, teachers in every curricular area are focusing on technology integration. "This has been really beneficial," says Boucher. "We often find something useful for our own content area when we see how teachers from other subject areas are using the technology."

"If we see another teacher doing something interesting, we're always asking them questions to find out how to apply it to our own lessons," agrees Quap. "We're all so eager to learn about the different things that we can do. We e-mail ideas to each other, we share materials on our intranet and we even share materials on our district intranet."

Educators like Quap, Gaona and Boucher are successfully incorporating SMART products into their classrooms to create dynamic, interactive lessons that meet the different learning styles of their students and achieve sustained student engagement. They pride themselves on creating a collaborative learning atmosphere that builds on every student's areas of strength. **EC**

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