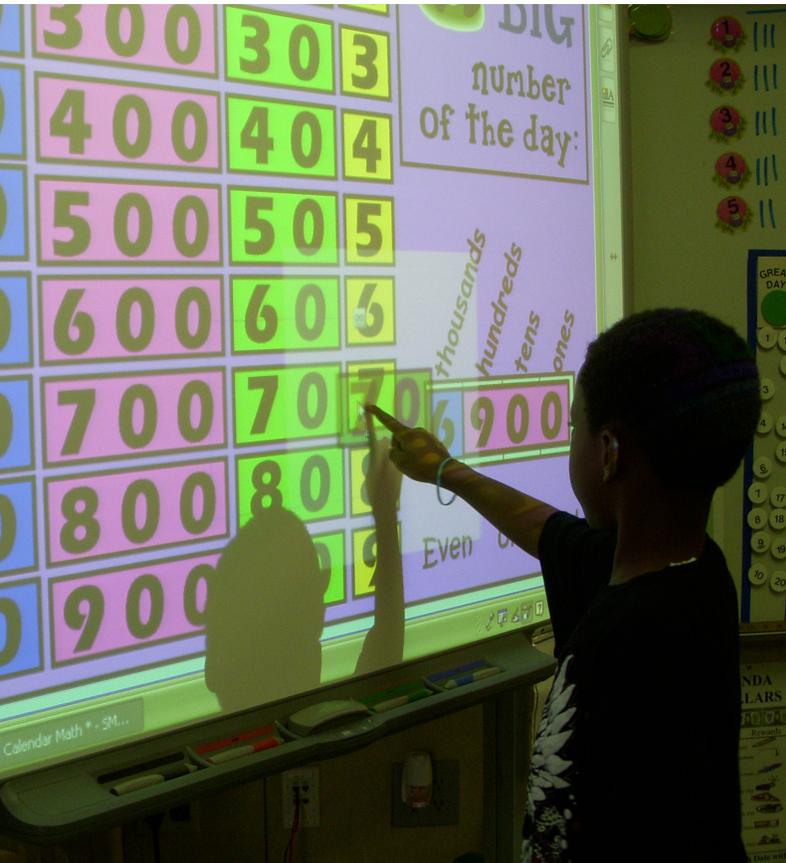


Grant Writing Helps Bring SMART Products to Palmview Elementary

By Christine Roulston



Because of today's stretched school budgets, when teachers at [Palmview Elementary School](#) in Pompano Beach, Florida, want a new resource for their classrooms, they know exactly where to go. "They don't go to the principal anymore," jokes Sheri Kleinman Dominguez, the school's grant liaison. "They know he's going to point to my office and say, 'Go see Dominguez. Go write a grant.'"

Over the past six years, Dominguez, who is also the school's media specialist, has helped bring \$316,000 worth of grant money to Palmview. And SMART

products have been one area of focus for the grant-writing efforts.

"We started out with three [SMART Board interactive whiteboards](#) six years ago, saw the impact they had on student learning, and began writing grants to obtain funding to purchase more boards," she says. This SMART Showcase School now has 10 SMART Board interactive whiteboards and several [SMART Document Cameras](#), [SMART Slate™ wireless slates](#) and [SMART Response interactive response systems](#).

Alison Fox, a [SMART Exemplary Educator](#) and second-grade teacher at Palmview, has successfully applied for several grants. She says that although the process can be time consuming, it is worth every minute. "To have the resources to engage students is critical for us," she says. "The school has improved one letter grade on standardized testing this year compared with last year. It's the result of engaged students."

Planning goes a long way

At Palmview, much of the work involved in grant writing begins before the actual writing even starts. "We spend time getting to know the organization providing the grant," Dominguez says. "This can be as simple as visiting their website, reading their mission statement and understanding why they're offering the grant."

Equally important is knowing information about your own school, such as the student demographics and areas of student need. Dominguez says such

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Pompano Beach, Florida

statistics as the number of students who qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches and the number in the English for Speakers of Other Languages program are essential.

And, according to Fox, follow-through at the end of the process can be just as important as the up-front work. “Do not underestimate the power of a thank-you note,” Fox says. “If your grant gets funded and you send a little note, when you write that same grant next year, maybe you’re more likely to get funded again because they remember that you’re appreciative.” Fox also sends photos of her students using the newly funded classroom resources, along with a write-up of how they’re being used.

Making your case crystal clear

Another important part of the grant-writing process at Palmview involves working to make the

submission as straightforward as possible. Instead of writing about how the grant will help students in general, Dominguez encourages teachers to paint a picture for the reader by picking a student’s name and giving examples of how the funding will help that particular student.

Similarly, the wording grant writers choose should also be straightforward, because many grant funders are not involved in the school system. “Fellow educators know something like AYP stands for average yearly progress, but you can’t assume that everyone else does,” Fox says. “You really need to spell things out.”

Building confidence and inspiring others

Dominguez advises teachers who are new to grant writing to start small. “It can be intimidating when you look at some of the applications and the work involved,” she says. “Usually, I’ll say to people with their first grant, write a little one. Then once they’re bitten by the grant bug, they realize they can do this.”

Teachers’ peers will also start to take notice. At Palmview, once teachers started reaping the rewards of their grant money, other teachers wanted the same resources for their classrooms. “Just this morning, a teacher was begging me for a SMART Board interactive whiteboard, asking, ‘How am I going to get this SMART Board?’” For Dominguez, the solution couldn’t be more obvious. “I said, ‘You’re going to write a grant!’”



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