

Supporting new learning methods with SMART products

By Wendy McMahon



Staff at [Christopher Columbus High School](#) (CCHS) in Miami, Florida have been finding innovative and effective ways to engage students with SMART products since opening the box of their first [SMART Board interactive whiteboard](#) in 2004. Eight years later, this private school for boys has equipped all 65 of its classrooms with a SMART Board interactive whiteboard, has a growing SMART Board users group and has been named a [SMART Elite Showcase School](#) for 2012.

Teachers at the school use SMART Board interactive whiteboards, [SMART Notebook collaborative learning software](#) and [SMART Response interactive response systems](#) daily. These educators are enthusiastic about sharing their best practices and knowledge of SMART products – or sharing the “SMART joy” as they like to call it.

SMART sharing

Mary T. McCullagh is the perfect example of someone who likes to share the “SMART joy.”

McCullagh, a [SMART Exemplary Educator](#), was one of the first teachers at the school to receive a SMART Board interactive whiteboard and quickly became an expert, volunteering her time to train and coach her colleagues. That prompted her to start the SMART Board Users UNITE group where teachers gather to share ideas, lessons, tips and tricks. “The SMART Board is something that I love using every day and I love being able to share it - teachers become much more confident using this technology,” she explains.

McCullagh, who teaches social studies, turns on her SMART Board interactive whiteboard the minute she walks into her classroom and doesn’t turn it off until the end of the day. “I want to be able to engage the kids much more actively and SMART Notebook does that for me,” she explains. “Being able to have visual, audio and video while we’re talking about a topic, takes advantage of all the different intelligences that the kids have.”

Improving comprehension

McCullagh’s volunteer training and support has led other CCHS teachers, like Erin Mcgrath, to discover new ways to make learning easier for students using SMART products. Mcgrath, who teaches English, algebra and drama, had never used a SMART Board interactive whiteboard before joining Christopher Columbus High School three years ago. But these days she says student comprehension has improved thanks to her SMART Board interactive whiteboard and SMART Notebook

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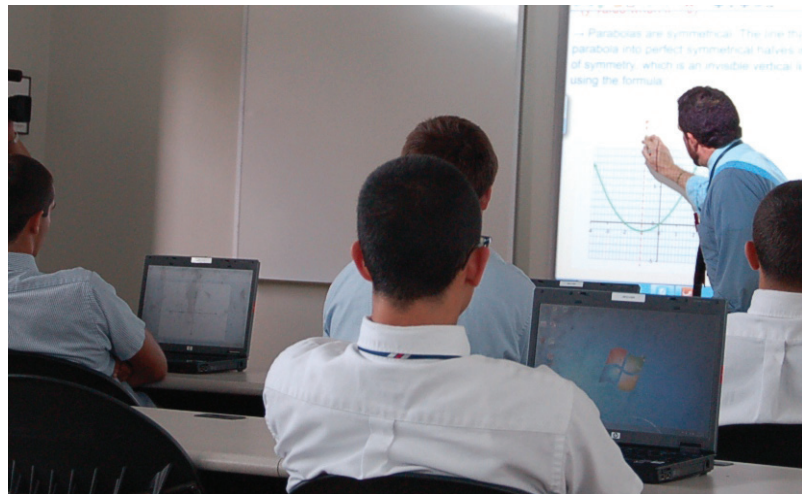
software. “I have found that the SMART Board has really helped make learning algebra easier for those students who struggle in math as well as those who are just visual learners in general,” she explains.

One strategy Mcgrath has found successful for increasing student understanding in her classes is using the features of SMART Notebook software to colour code algebra equations. “If it’s all just black and white or it’s all just on a chalkboard it can seem like a lot of work, or a lot of letters, or a lot of numbers all at once, and that can be very frustrating, especially for math students,” explains Mcgrath.

She says colourful, visually appealing lessons make it easier for students to comprehend the content.

Flipping the classroom

For math department leader and teacher Carlos Moro, the discovery of just one feature of SMART Notebook software has completely changed his classes. During a SMART training course, Moro was introduced to the SMART Recorder tool, which records a screencast and sound, and in his words, he was “blown away.” At first he used the tool to record lectures for substitute teachers to play if he knew he would be away for a day.



Now, Moro records all of his lectures and posts them on YouTube for students to watch as their homework - leaving class time open to work on problems, ask questions and receive support – a practice also known as [flipped learning](#).

He has noticed a marked increase in students who didn’t have very good note-taking skills. “For students that maybe couldn’t get everything while I’m teaching, this is a great way for them to follow up. This is a good way for students to listen and watch, and then at home they can take notes at their own pace and on their own time.”

Moro says flipping his classroom took extra work but having tools like the SMART Board interactive whiteboard, SMART Notebook software and SMART Response systems to support his efforts was the key to his success. And of course, knowing that he is supporting his students is worth the added effort.

“I get a satisfaction that is just priceless to me when I know that I did a good job and I reached a student and I helped him learn. That’s really powerful.”



Your school can become a SMART Showcase School and be recognized for using SMART collaborative learning solutions to create exceptional learning environments. If selected, your school will receive exclusive membership benefits and opportunities. It will have an opportunity to share its success story and serve as a host site for other educators who want to find out about the benefits of implementing SMART products. [Learn more](#).