

# Preparing Teachers for Technological Success

By Wendy McMahon



Slow and steady wins the race. **The Tatnall School** in Wilmington, Delaware, has applied that adage to its integration plans for **SMART Board interactive whiteboards** – with amazing results. Usage rates are high and teachers and students are more engaged. In fact, the school has seven **SMART Exemplary Educators**, and in addition to being a **SMART Showcase School**, Tatnall was named one of 25 SMART Showcase Elite Schools for 2011.

Since 2008, the private school has also been hosting an annual SMART Board User Conference that attracts more than 500 educators from nearby states.

## Taking time for training

The process began five years ago when Tatnall administrators asked those teachers interested in a SMART Board interactive whiteboard for their

classrooms to first take part in PD and training sessions. The teachers were then asked to convert their curriculum into digital format using **SMART Notebook collaborative learning software**. The approach ensured that teachers were prepared for and excited about receiving a SMART Board interactive whiteboard and that they could effectively use it the moment it arrived in their classrooms.

“It was very purposeful what we did as a school – we wanted people who were ready to move forward with the technology. We didn’t want to put them in every classroom,” explains Greg Mentzer, a teacher and the training and support person for SMART Board interactive whiteboards at Tatnall.

## Developing effective teachers

Kindergarten teacher Colleen Hoban is a perfect example of how Tatnall’s implementation strategy worked. Before receiving her SMART Board interactive whiteboard, Hoban participated in training sessions, created SMART Notebook lessons and twice attended Tatnall’s SMART Board User Conference.

Now, Hoban uses the interactive whiteboard and SMART Notebook software every day for everything from discussing the morning weather maps and patterns to sorting and reading activities. “I do a lot of individual, small-group as well as whole-group work,” says Hoban. “The children on average are touching the SMART Board multiple times throughout the day.”

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### Colleen Hoban

Teacher  
The Tatnall School  
Wilmington, Delaware

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She believes the interactive whiteboard combined with her training and PD has helped her be more effective in the classroom. “I’m finding that with my being more effective as a teacher, my children are learning at a faster pace and are learning more throughout the year,” explains Hoban.

### Generating enthusiasm

Mentzer has noticed that teachers who are confident using their interactive whiteboards are also more enthusiastic teachers – including him.

Now in his 39th year of teaching at Tatnall, Mentzer received his first SMART Board interactive whiteboard seven years ago. “When I got that first SMART Board, it was like I’d been to the mountain. It was a renewal. It’s fun, it’s engaging. I couldn’t wait to do stuff.”

### Helping students learn

In his lower school science classes, Mentzer uses the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to help students develop the science, technology, engineering and math skills they’ll need in the workforce.

“I want to have kids make more precise observations. I want them to use that information to help



them facilitate inferential thinking. I want kids to communicate more effectively. So I’m using the SMART Board in a graphical way,” he explains.

For example, Mentzer uses the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to review video clips or images taken during labs to help students focus their attention.

With the teaching and learning success at Tatnall, the school has decided to standardize on SMART products. Tatnall School now has 66 SMART Board interactive whiteboards – one for nearly every classroom from kindergarten to the high school level. It also has six **SMART Response interactive response systems** and three **SMART Document Cameras** in various classrooms throughout the school.

“We wanted to standardize, and it only makes sense to have equipment that can work in concert. It’s so easy to insert a [SMART] Response question or to switch on the document camera and put something under it and view it and capture that as an image. It’s a great product and the product line works,” says Mentzer.



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