

# Using Interactive Whiteboards in the Elementary Classroom

By Jamie Hutchison, MACUL Grant Recipient

Rewind to the classic 20<sup>th</sup> century classroom. Think chalkboard. Think chalk. Think textbooks. Now try to imagine student motivation.

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. Think SmartBoards. Think projector. Think computer. Think information superhighway. Now *see* student motivation.

I had the typical 20<sup>th</sup> century classroom. My second grade students had little exposure to technology. There was one computer in the classroom and one computer lab in the building. The students had access to the computer lab up to five days a week, but I knew that wasn't enough. This didn't prepare them to cross that bridge to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as they traveled to the upper elementary building. I knew my students entering third grade would face a technology "culture" shock. There they would face classrooms with wireless one-to-one computing, data projectors, laser printers, digital microscopes, digital cameras, classroom response systems, and SmartBoards. What could I do as a second grade teacher to ease this transition into a new style of learning?

Like most districts, funding is a continuous hindrance to acquiring classroom technology. Applying for the MACUL grant seemed like the perfect solution to this common problem. The grant awarded South Bendle Elementary a SmartBoard, stylus set, and a microphone. The day the SmartBoard arrived was like welcoming a new child into the family. I ran to a colleague and shared my good news! We quickly christened our new technology tool "Smarty". Within days, I had explored websites, created lessons, and downloaded activities to use with the SmartBoard.

The first time the students had the opportunity to use the SmartBoard they were sitting on the edge of their seats. I have

never seen my students more motivated to learn. They were eager, attentive, and engaged. I quickly discovered that using the SmartBoard was a far more effective way to expand my students' world. In the past, a lesson on the White House included a picture of the White House, a read-aloud picture book, and a few extra activities. Now that same lesson includes a virtual tour of the White House where the students can actually see beyond the pages of a book. In addition, routine math curriculum has become exciting with the use of interactive manipulatives that can be found in the SmartBoard interactive gallery. My students' favorites include the rolling dice, the thermometer, the counting charts, and the spinners.

The buzz of excitement has spread throughout the building! Students and teachers alike are eager to use the new technology tool. The grant has directly led to the purchasing of two more SmartBoards to be used in our Kindergarten through second grade building. Although technology integration is a slow process, South Bendle is making great strides to improve student preparedness for the technology rich future that they face.

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