

Helping increase student engagement and meet AYP

Hitachi's StarBoard interactive whiteboards are making a difference in teaching and learning

At Temple Heights Elementary School in Vista USD in Oceanside, CA, Principal Shari Fernandez was looking for ways to meet adequate yearly progress benchmarks, especially for the school's large population of English language learners.

During a visit to a neighboring school, she watched teachers use interactive whiteboards, and she instantly saw how the devices allowed teachers to transition easily from one day's lesson to the next and, more significantly, how they helped students get more engaged in the learning activities.

"I knew we needed this to help with instruction and meet our AYP goals," Ms. Fernandez said. To bring interactive whiteboards to her school, she found allies among several teachers who had used them in previous jobs, as well as in Scott Hill, the district's technology coordinator. Mr. Hill and his team had recently selected Hitachi's StarBoard as the standard-issue interactive whiteboard for the district.

Unlike traditional interactive whiteboards, which require a battery-powered, hard-to-replace stylus, the Hitachi StarBoards are controlled with a finger. In addition, the StarBoard's touch-sensitive technology means that dings, scratches and even punctures won't interfere with the device's functionality. For teachers, the StarBoards come with software and resources to help foster student engagement.

An easy-to-use product at an affordable price

"We liked the StarBoard for its durability, ease of use and, frankly, affordability," Mr. Hill said. With prices for the StarBoard line of interactive whiteboards starting at \$999, it becomes very affordable to place the devices in every classroom, which was important to the educators at Vista USD.

At the start of the 2010-11 school year, the StarBoards were installed in all 13 of Temple Heights' third-, fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms. "I wanted all the teachers in those grades to use it," Ms. Fernandez said. "I didn't want parents asking why their child's

classroom wasn't doing the neat activities that another class was doing."

By the start of the 2011-12 academic year, the implementation will be expanded to the rest of the school, and every teacher will be expected to use the StarBoards throughout the day. To meet that goal, Ms. Fernandez is taking advantage of Hitachi's policy of free, unlimited training, which is provided by a network of former teachers. Training is both on-site and Web-based, and includes access to a library of short videos on how to use the StarBoards in everyday teaching.

An important element of the school improvement plan

Ensuring that the StarBoards are used every day by every teacher is an important element of Temple Heights' improvement plan, particularly for students who are learning English, Ms. Fernandez explained. "It's really helping us meet the needs of our second-language learners," she said. "It provides visual representation for the language that they're acquiring. The StarBoards are really making a difference for them."

Technology Coordinator Hill sees similar benefits at other schools in the district where the StarBoards have been installed. "It pulls the kids into the lesson more than what happens with just a standard whiteboard or overhead projector or document camera," he said. "The teachers are getting way more involvement from the kids, and the principals see it as a critical piece to continuing the improvement of instruction at their schools."

That's certainly the case at Temple Heights Elementary, where Ms. Fernandez says the StarBoards are contributing to improvements in both teaching and learning that she expects will lead to gains in test scores and AYP.

"My teachers are taking more time to develop lessons, and they're planning those lessons together," she said. "And the students are more excited than ever about learning. They're more engaged and on task. And that engagement is the best return on our investment."



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Principal
Temple Heights Elementary School*

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*Scott Hill
Technology Coordinator
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