



Terese Keogh at work.

I Am in Love (With My SMARTBoard)!

By Terese Keogh

When I first saw Brett Thompson demonstrate a SMARTBoard at the fall conference last year, I saw the future of physics teaching and I knew I had to get prepared. I began by taking a 15 hour course at my school last spring and when I was notified that my classroom was selected to get a SMARTBoard installed this September, I took a week-long course at Babylon High School with Eric Reisert, a veteran SMARTBoard user. I was psyched in September with already a few rudimentary lessons prepared for the first week. To say that I love my SMARTBoard would be an understatement and though I have not mastered it, it's been great fun for me and my students who are taking the journey with me.

The ability to go between technologies has made my lessons flow so much easier. I can do a lesson that uses a video that I have embedded, or link to a website or powerpoint presentation with a touch of a finger. I knew I would like its ability to move things around such as showing how vectors can be moved and still get the same resultant. Doing the same thing with graphs as I align distance, velocity and acceleration graphs one on top of another to show the progression of graphs has amazed my students so much that one even asked me how I was ever able to teach physics without a SMARTBoard.

I have found that SMARTBoard lessons

planned in advance work best. But, unlike powerpoint presentations which do not allow changes, the SMARTBoard lessons are flexible enough to let you improvise on the spot. For instance, in one lesson I was discussing forces and the Iron Cross maneuver done by male gymnasts. Some of my students didn't know what the Iron Cross was, so I googled images and found a great picture of a male gymnast in the Iron Cross position. I quickly copied it into my SMARTBoard presentation and then took out the protractor from the gallery to measure the angle of his arms to show how his arms were not perfectly horizontal. From there, we did a quick estimation of the force that each arm was exerting. All this was accomplished in about 10 minutes.

For someone like me whose handwriting is illegible, the SMARTBoard has been a saving grace for my students and now I can easily embed pictures so that my students are not exposed to my "artistic" expression of what a truck or person would look like. SMARTBoards are a major innovation on how a class can be taught. I just have to hope that there's no computer or electrical breakdowns. But, at least, I still have my trusty old chalkboard if that happens. And my artwork again will generate a game of Pictionary as students try to guess what I have attempted to draw.

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