

Enabling 21st century learning with SMART solutions

Universal American School (UAS), United Arab Emirates



With the SMART solutions the students are more engaged, excited and motivated.

The Universal American School (UAS) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) was founded in 2005 and provides a challenging, inquiry-based American education system with an agenda enabling students to be critical thinkers and responsible global citizens. UAS is also part of the Educational Services Overseas Limited (ESOL) group, an organization that is committed to providing top-quality educational programs in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions.

Armed with a mandate to empower students with 21st century Information Technology tools to ensure maximum learning opportunities, UAS incorporated a new approach to teaching which sought to actively integrate students with technology, on-line resources and a wealth of interactivity.

Turning students into active participants

Initially starting with 15 SMART Board® interactive whiteboards in 2008, UAS noticed significant positive effects on the student body, which included greater involvement and interest during lessons, heightened engagement and interactivity between the teachers and students, and an increased level of comfort when it came to using technology to enhance the learning curve. “We noticed a shift in the students’ attitudes, where they went from being essentially an audience, to becoming an integral part of the learning process – once they discovered the endless possibilities that SMART Board interactive whiteboards offered, they automatically became more engaged, excited and motivated. The fact that they can touch the screen, manipulate the different elements and work dynamically with their teachers, has enabled a new level of collaborative learning,” commented Sudha Sunder, ICT and Curriculum Integration Coordinator, IB ITGS teacher.

Currently, UAS has 81 SMART Board interactive whiteboards installed, which encompass all their classrooms and are used by 100% of the teaching faculty.

Challenge

To empower the students of UAS with 21st century Information Technology tools to ensure maximum learning opportunities and the ability to adapt in an increasingly technologically driven world.

Solution

UAS incorporated a new approach to teaching which actively promoted technology, on-line resources and a wealth of interactivity into lessons. The lessons moved away from the traditional “chalk-talk” methodology to enhanced collaborative learning.

Result

SMART Boards and SMART Notebook® software enable a truly interactive, hands-on and communicative curriculum which has resulted in greater student participation, higher motivation levels and increased levels of interactivity in the classroom.

UAS has two in-house certified SMART Trainers who conduct regular training seminars, workshops and refresher courses for the faculty.

Modifying lesson plans to ensure a richer and more interactive experience

The implementation of SMART Board® interactive whiteboards and SMART Notebook® software has also yielded great benefits for teachers, who can now modify lesson plans to ensure a rich and interactive experience in which students from varying levels of understanding can participate. "The dynamic within the classroom has changed completely, with students now wanting to be active participants, and we can structure our lesson plans to enable them to do so," stated Stephen Michalic, Secondary Mathematics Teacher: "One of the greatest advantages is that we can cater to a wide range of levels - take math for example. Using the SMART Notebook recording features in my Math lesson, students can replay what happened in class and solve problems at their own pace. This would not have been possible previously and is just one example of how the adoption of technological advancements has benefited our students. It helps them better understand complex conceptual mathematical concepts".

Another example is the effective use of the Lesson Activity Tool Kit in the Arabic classroom. It helps produce engaging and interactive lessons that creates a 'mind active' rather than a 'mind passive' learning environment. And students organize their thinking process better. According to Faten Abilmona, Secondary and IB teacher Arabic: "SMART Notebook allows us to develop content to suit the needs of each individual classroom, and the results have been extraordinary – we see students responding in real time and especially when operating in a multi-cultural environment, it is an asset to be able to import visuals, illustrations and on-line resources to illuminate principles and ideas which may be difficult to grasp."

SMART at UAS has demonstrated a remarkable buy-in by all concerned stakeholders. For the students, the SMART Board interactive whiteboards are a move away from the traditional "chalk talk" methods and signify the use of multi-media, visuals and hands-on interactivity which is exciting and engaging. The adoption of SMART Boards and the corresponding collaborative software by UAS has enabled students to become more technology- literate while making the overall education process more engaging and collaborative, with a lasting impact on pupils' understanding of the core curriculum.

UAS is now boasting three Exemplary Educators and two SMART certified trainers, and it has acquired the coveted designation of a SMART Showcase school in 2011. UAS thus became the first SMART Showcase School in the UAE. From the first set of SMART Boards purchased in 2006, it has been an incredible journey of using this powerful technology to enhance teaching and learning at UAS. Seamlessly integrating SMART Boards in the daily routine of teaching and learning that enhances pedagogy in a multi-cultural setting with students with varied learning styles is an aspect that UAS is proud of, and eager to share with peers.

A SMART advocate, sharing its experience with peers

INDEMAJ is an independent non-profit organization under the Royal Patronage and leadership of HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, wife of HH Sheikh Muhammed Bin Rashid Al Hussein Vice President and Prime Minister UAE, Ruler of Dubai. "INDEMAJ is committed to support the development of quality inclusive education in UAE Government Schools. We highly value the opportunity to visit this SMART Showcase School. It was of immense interest to us to observe how teachers use technology for differentiation instructions. As we know the real impact on the students' learning does not only depend on the software; but as much on how this software is being used. SMART Technologies plays a key role in substantially increasing the motivation for the students as well as extending the curriculum in all INDEMAJ's schools", explains Hanne Al Gurg, CEO INDEMAJ.



Dr. Gunther Brandt and Sudha Sunder of UAS proudly displaying their plaque of appreciation which was presented to them by Indemaj.

"Technology use in classrooms is mostly assigned for the belief that students need to be entertained and need to feel that the school is up to date with the technology revolution around. This old idea came to an end when teachers realize that technology in classrooms is to be used effectively and meaningfully based on the objectives of authentic learning. I can say, SMART Boards integration in the teaching learning process was the smart step ever made by UAS. SMART Notebook is a full resource a teacher may use to explain, interpret and deliver a lesson to students. At the same time, it is a great way for students to be involved, well engaged in the lesson and to examine their knowledge in an effective way."

Dr. Gunther Brandt,
UAS School Director

About SMART

SMART Technologies is a leading provider of collaboration solutions that transform the way the world works and learns. We believe that collaboration and interaction should be easy. As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, we bring more than two decades of collaboration research and development to a broad range of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, so collaborating and learning with digital resources are more natural.

SMART Technologies

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