Atlantis Secondary School
Atlantis, South Africa

South African students are empowered through lessons on SMART Board interactive whiteboards

Atlantis Secondary School is a high-achieving school in the town of Atlantis on South Africa’s west coast, about 30 km north of Cape Town in the Western Cape province. The town has a high level of unemployment and students’ parents often face economic hardship.

The school’s 86 percent pass rate in the 2006 matriculation (final year) examinations attests to the sense of mutual respect and achievement through hard work that the school instills in students, encouraging them to rise above their circumstances. The school is a source of pride in the town.

The predominant language in Atlantis is Afrikaans, but the 1,630 students are taught lessons in English and Afrikaans by nearly 60 teachers. A specialist maths and science school, Atlantis Secondary School also includes English, Afrikaans and life orientation among its compulsory subjects. Optional subjects include social studies, business studies, and travel and tourism science.

The school aims at excellence in maths and science and it is supported by the Khanya Project. The project is an initiative of the Western Cape Education Department to deliver support and information and communication technology to schools in disadvantaged communities to help narrow the digital divide.

In 2005, the first SMART Board interactive whiteboard was donated to the school by the UK-based Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. In 2006, the school acquired four more SMART Board interactive whiteboards – two were bought through the Khanya Project and Microsoft® Corporation donated two. Each department has its own SMART Board interactive whiteboard.

Challenge
Create a learning environment for students and teachers to excel through technology despite limited resources and economic hardship in the community.

SMART solution
SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard

Case result
The digital divide between schools in South Africa is narrowing. Students are more enthused and teachers have streamlined lesson planning.
Deputy principal Harvey Cupido says a major advantage of the SMART Board interactive whiteboards is the ability to save work written on the interactive whiteboards by teachers and students. “Because we have limited resources, more than one teacher uses a classroom. So, when a teacher needs to leave the classroom, the work written on the interactive whiteboard is saved to a flash drive for later use.” Teachers no longer need to worry about erased work.

Pictures or articles downloaded via the Internet can be saved, edited and used when needed without having to surf the Web again. Students have also delighted in scanning photographs of their environment and neighborhoods for projects using Microsoft PowerPoint® and Publisher software. Many teachers have even developed their own Afrikaans-medium teaching material, using Microsoft Office software.

Cupido, also a life orientation teacher, uses the SMART Board interactive whiteboard mainly as a writing tool and to save written work for the next class. “Students love to see their handwriting, notes and art work saved in a file and then displayed for others to see. They enjoy being artist celebrities – it gives them confidence,” says Cupido. An unexpected advantage is that shy and reserved students learn new skills and blossom when able to express themselves through the interactive whiteboards.

Teachers who successfully use SMART Board interactive whiteboards have become better teachers and ambassadors, encouraging their colleagues to become literate in the technology. When in discussion groups with teachers from other schools in the area, Cupido says he can easily spot those who work with SMART Board interactive whiteboards. “They are visibly empowered, proud of their improved teaching abilities and the fact that they teach at Atlantis Secondary School.”

As the deputy principal, Cupido invests time and energy in encouraging teachers to enjoy using the interactive whiteboard as a tool and not be intimidated by it. “Three years ago we had two teachers working with the technology. Now we have 15 who are comfortable with their abilities to use the technology.”

He says that key to encouraging his colleagues and students to use the technology to its full potential is to have enthusiastic and technical people experiment and play with the SMART Board interactive whiteboards and peripherals, such as digital cameras.

“A certain inquisitiveness is needed to explore and challenge ideas, and then pass this on to colleagues and students,” says Cupido. “The rewards are lessons where students and teachers readily interact in the exploratory learning process that gives them confidence for life outside the school.”

Atlantis Secondary School principal Charles Marthinussen says using the SMART Board interactive whiteboards has made a tremendous difference in teaching approaches and lesson planning. In addition, he comments, “The students have embraced the technology. Being connected to the Internet has made them eager to search for, and use, information from a variety of sources.”

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and other group collaboration tools. The award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboard is the most widely installed interactive whiteboard in the world. Many school jurisdictions have standardized on the product, which is used to provide interactive learning opportunities and enhance student achievement in more than 450,000 classrooms spanning every U.S. state, every Canadian province, every Local Authority in the UK and in more than 100 countries worldwide. SMART products also include interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage, wireless slates and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART’s education customers include New York City Board of Education (U.S.), Oxford University (UK), Kobe City Board of Education (Japan), Barrier Public School (Australia), University of Ottawa (Canada), United World College (Singapore), Stephen-Hawking-Schule Neckargemuend (Germany), Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (U.S.) and Harvard University (U.S.).

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 900 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Ottawa, and offices in Bonn, Tokyo, China, New York City and Washington, DC. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. In 1992 SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel® Corporation that resulted in joint product development and marketing efforts, and Intel’s equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. For more information, visit www.smarttech.com.