



Cole Canyon Elementary School, Murietta, CA Capturing students' attention with Mimio products

Cole Canyon Elementary School in Murietta, California, enrolls approximately 1,150 students in grades K-5. Some 15 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. The suburban school is part of the Murietta Valley Unified School District, and consistently ranks among the top performing schools in Riverside County, posting an Academic Performance Index (API) test score of 917 for the 2010-2011 school year.

The teachers at Cole Canyon recognize that the technologies students enjoy outside of school make it more difficult to capture their attention with conventional tools like textbooks, chalkboards, dry erase boards, overhead projectors, and wall-mounted TVs. To combat this problem, the school's principal, Mike Marble, initiated a 2011 pilot program with the MimioTeach™ interactive whiteboard. This innovative product from Mimio turns an ordinary whiteboard into an interactive whiteboard, and its audio, video, and Flash files have been proven to significantly impact student learning.

The school also purchased Mimio's online reading program, MimioReading™ comprehension, which improves the reading comprehension skills of students in grades 3-5. In August 2011, both products were placed in Anne Hess's third-grade classroom.

"I've been teaching for over 25 years, and what I've observed is that often the problem with most technologies is the technology itself," says Hess. "Some technologies have a steep learning curve. Others are too difficult for teachers to integrate with their existing lesson plans. Still others fail to interest teachers and students after the initial excitement wears off. That's not true with the MimioTeach!"

Hess was invited to attend a training session the month before the MimioTeach interactive whiteboard arrived. "The very morning it arrived, I literally pulled it out of the box, plugged it into my computer and projector, and I was ready to start teaching," she says.

Technology that changes the game for teachers and students

Before the pilot program, Hess would project images for math, reading, and art lessons via the TV in the corner of her classroom. "Some students were 10-12 feet away, and it made it very difficult for them to see anything on that small screen," she recalls. "With everything incorporated with the MimioTeach interactive whiteboard, the entire teaching and learning dynamic changed."

When the new Mimio products arrived, Hess immediately supplemented her language arts curriculum with MimioReading comprehension, and got students actively working at the board on daily math problems, leaving their textbooks closed. She even found numerous ways to incorporate the expansive MimioTeach Gallery and annotation tools into her Masters of the Art program.

"I believe I'm a better teacher since adding the MimioTeach to my classroom – the possibilities for making my lessons more creative and engaging are absolutely limitless, and this interactive technology has made me feel more connected to my students."

— Anne Hess
THIRD-GRADE TEACHER,
COLE CANYON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



CASE STUDY

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“This lesson, for the first time in many years, was fresh and current – it just came alive,” she says. “I had the ability, in real time, to showcase the famous works of art from painters like Georgia O’Keefe. With just a few clicks of a button, I displayed some of her renowned collections from the Internet, and the students were manipulating the paintings, learning about colors and shapes and more – all on my whiteboard. I could tell the students loved it.”

Hess reports that she easily adapted to the Mimio system because she didn’t have to redesign her existing lesson plans to incorporate the technology. “Mimio has enhanced my lesson plans by giving me greater versatility, along with multimedia features and interactivity, opening the door to new possibilities.”

For example, over the years Hess had watched students struggle with the concept of finding the main idea in reading and comprehension activities. But that all changed when she incorporated the MimioReading program into her lesson plan to help her students master this skill.

In the program, students are encouraged to think about passages as being “mostly about” a particular topic, through a series of interactive activities. The exercise directs the students to count the number of sentences that “mostly” reference the main idea or theme, and the concept is brought to life through a game in which students go to the interactive whiteboard and move balls into an on-screen tube to mark each sentence that references similar thoughts.

“For my students, the ‘aha’ moment comes when they can actually observe what the main idea is. Those colored balls represent the various sentences that work together to define the main idea – and they can SEE it,” says Hess. Her students have transferred that skill to their written exams. “After reading the passage on an exam, they now count the sentences – putting numbers above the sentences that reference similar thoughts – and then they can easily answer the questions correctly after counting the numbers, just like they count the balls on the screen. It’s just awesome,” Hess reports.

Hess describes a similar outcome when she teaches her students about proving their answers. During class, she will display a paragraph on the MimioTeach interactive whiteboard and ask the students to read it and a selection of possible answers. Then she invites students to the board to select the correct answer and prove it by highlighting key words in the passage on the board using the highlighter tool. During exams, Hess requires her students to highlight key words on their tests in order to prove how they arrived at their answers.

“This process takes guessing out of the equation. They have to search for the clues that lead them to the correct answer...these are the kind of skills that will make them successful students in any subject.”

From pilot program to essential classroom tool

“The powerful MimioTeach and MimioReading combination has opened my eyes to different ways to teach particular ideas or concepts,” Hess notes. “I can’t wait to spend time with the solution this summer, so when I’m preparing my lessons for next year, I’ll spend even more time thinking about how I can bring the lessons alive. In the long run, this is going to help my students grasp concepts better and make teaching easier.”

Principal Marble would like to add a MimioTeach interactive whiteboard to all six of the school’s third-grade classrooms, based on Hess’s ringing endorsement. “Cole Canyon teachers do an excellent job in helping our students excel academically, as our API scores indicate. Yet teaching today has to be more hands-on, integrated, and thematic, instead of worksheet and drill-oriented,” he says. “This solution will give our teachers a way to step out of the traditional role of just ‘instructing’ and into one where they are facilitators to the learning process and the students are the active participants.”