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– Sally Paveley, Special Educational Needs Consultant

Students with Learning Disabilities Succeed Using Interactive Whiteboards

The right combination of technology and support from innovative teachers is helping special needs students at The Bridge School make major learning breakthroughs.

The Bridge teaches students five to nineteen years old who have Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD).

In 2004, school staff took part in a research project studying the impact of ICT on students with PMLD, ASD and SLD. During the project, staff visited similar special education schools and witnessed the positive effects interactive whiteboards were having on students. Bridge staff wanted these tools for their classrooms, but they had to find a brand of interactive whiteboard that would accommodate all of their students.

"We did some research and decided that SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards would be the best fit for our needs," explains Sally Paveley, a special educational needs consultant for Bridge.

"A major thing the SMART Board interactive whiteboard has going for it is that you can use your fingers on it. Although 90 percent of

our students could use a stylus or some other device, there is always going to be that 10 percent who can't. To exclude them wouldn't be fair."

Paveley, who is also a teacher at the school, says her students have shown higher levels of concentration since she began using the interactive whiteboards during lessons.

"In just about every lesson now, I start by using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. The students are paying attention and focusing on what's happening. That's a big thing; we have a lot of students who have big problems with concentration."

Eleanor, a young Bridge student, has profound learning disabilities, but is making significant learning achievements using the interactive whiteboard. When she first arrived at the school, her range of motion in her arms was very limited. She tended to hold her arms tightly to her chest and just flap her hands.

Her teacher, Andrew Beswetherick, wanted to work with Eleanor to achieve two goals. First, he wanted her to extend her range of movement and second, determine if she could understand a cause-and-effect relationship.

Challenge

Find an interactive whiteboard that all students can use, even those who can't hold a pen.

SMART Solution

SMART Board interactive whiteboards

Result

Students are more focused, have higher concentration levels and are making significant learning breakthroughs.

The Bridge School

Case Study, London, United Kingdom

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Beswetherick spoke to Eleanor's parents and learned that she enjoyed the music of Eric Clapton. So he made PowerPoint files that would play bits of Clapton's music when Eleanor touched the interactive whiteboard's screen. After a while, he made the activity more difficult by requiring her to touch a picture to make the music play.

“I was able to work on two things at the same time,” explains Beswetherick. “One was to have her touch her target more accurately and understand that touching a specific spot would produce an effect. The other was, by putting a picture high up in, say, the right hand corner of the screen, to have her reach outside her normal range of movement to touch it.

“She will do it now, and every time she does it, it lays down a new template in her brain. It's been a real success,” he confirms.

Beswetherick says when a student is just beginning to understand cause and effect, it is important for them to get a big effect. That's why he dims the lights and turns up the volume on the speakers. “When they touch the interactive whiteboard, they really get a massive amount of feedback, which helps them to develop cause-and-effect understanding.”

Paveley says staff and students are pleased with the success they've had with the products. Now that teachers are using the interactive whiteboards, all students can see what is happening during a lesson and everybody feels included.

And as for Eleanor, with the help of Beswetherick and the interactive whiteboard, she continues to set and achieve new learning goals everyday.

“The SMART Board interactive whiteboards are accessible, durable and they survive well.”

About SMART

SMART is both the industry pioneer and global market leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and other group collaboration tools. SMART products include the family of award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboards, interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART customers include NASA, British Telecom, BMW, the Los Angeles Lakers, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Disney Imagineering and Harvard University. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide.



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