

## New technology energizes student learning

### SMART SYSTEMS: Leading the way in DSBN classroom upgrades

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As a classroom setting, the scene seems traditional.

Sheridan Park School teacher Adolfo Diiorio asks Grade 8 students about where probability can be found.

Mickayla Beyer, 14, and her fellow students take turns walking to the front.

There, they scribble out some answers -- horse racing, weather, card games.

The one big difference is that teacher and students are linked by electronic blackboards and pens that are writing the next chapter of the digital age.

On Thursday, the District School Board of Niagara showcased technology tools it is introducing to classrooms.

The Sheridan Park system uses Smart Boards and response systems that connect a computer, students and teacher with an interactive electronic screen.

The event at the DSBN headquarters included the Sheridan Park Smart demonstration and a sample of vLearning, using video and audio technology to connect other schools in real-time.

"This system makes it easier to learn, rather than just using a plain chalkboard," said Mickayla.

"For this lesson on probability, we're using electronic dice that you can actually roll."

"It's easier than students having one on their own; here you can see it right in front of you. It makes me want to learn more."

Diiorio is also impressed by the Smart technology and says he thinks it provides an excellent visual aid to learning.

It's also ideal for students who may not be motivated, "but are so in tune with technology."

"You can see the interface and what's going on," he said.

Dino Miele, the school board's chief information officer, said the aim of the computer tools is to energize student learning.

"The classroom has gone from chalkboards, pens and paper and we've now incorporated technology with that," he said.

Miele said the DSBN intends to launch its classroom modernization drive starting in September and continuing over the next few years.

Pilot programs are in place and the board will train teachers on the systems.

"We want to engage students with this and also improve their achievement," he said. "And our students are not going to become (just) consumers, but also producers of the information."

At another Smart demonstration at DSBN headquarters, Kaitlyn Viney of Forestview School in Niagara Falls learned her Canadian history needed polishing.

Teacher David Elia clicked through a multiple-choice quiz that asked students the names of the second Canadian prime minister and the critter on the Canuck quarter.

The teens logged in and made their choices using handsets.

Kaitlyn, 14, scores 54% in the 12-question test. She shakes her head, laughing in dismay.

"Well, I guess I don't know my stuff," she said.

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What it means

Smart Board:

An interactive white board with a touch screen. It can display text, images, sound and video files to help teachers deliver multimedia lessons. Teachers can also record lessons and the interactions to review later. The boards can connect to the Internet and social networks.

Smart Response Systems:

A small unit sends information from students to a main screen. Answers are logged and the teacher can review the information instantly. This lets them see how well students are grasping the material and adjust the lessons.

Teachers have the ability to ask true or false, numerical answer, yes-or-no, multiple choice or multiple answer questions.

vLearning:

vLearning uses video and audio technology to connect a teacher to several other classrooms in other schools.

Students can watch the lessons on their Smart Boards and ask the teacher questions in real time.

-- from District School Board of Niagara

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