

Meeting Teachers' Learning Needs

by Nancy Knowlton

Like everyone today, teachers must routinely learn new skills. When a SMART Board interactive whiteboard is added to their classrooms, teachers must learn the powerful features and functions of Notebook software as well as the appropriate way of applying the whiteboard in everyday teaching and learning.

Not everyone learns in the same way, so there are several SMART Professional Development offerings and individual initiatives to accommodate a variety of learning styles, satisfying those who like to learn on their own and those who learn best in a more structured environment.



Exploring the Software

Notebook software follows industry standards, with a menu structure that resembles many other mainstream applications. If teachers spend some time exploring the menus and the toolbars, they will quickly understand a significant portion of the available features.

Help Center in Notebook Software

There is a wealth of material contained in the SMART Notebook Help Center. It provides as much information as a teacher might want to explore about the operation of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and the various software components.

Online Training Resources

SMART Professional Development offers four types of online materials:

- **Quick References** – these one- and two-page guides provide quick tips on the basics
- **Hands-on Practice** – these step-by-step activities review SMART Board interactive whiteboard features and encourage teachers to try the functions
- **Two-Minute Tutorials** – these Flash demos teach skills relevant to the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and other SMART products
- **Additional Tools** – these resources and downloads offer hands-on ideas for using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard in the classroom

Live Online Training

These free 35- to 60-minute computer and telephone conferences provide an overview of the basics on a variety of products at a variety of levels. Participants see and hear what the instructor is discussing, and can ask questions.

Master's Training

These fee-based, full-day sessions are designed to give participants hands-on experience with the product at both the beginner and intermediate levels. SMART offers sessions at customer locations and in major cities.

Train-the-Trainer Sessions

These fee-based, full-day train-the-trainer events take product knowledge to the level where on-staff trainers become sufficiently knowledgeable to train others on SMART products.

Reseller Training

Free and fee-based training sessions are offered by certified SMART resellers. Certification means that they have attended a three-day training event that has prepared them to train on SMART Board interactive whiteboards, and they keep their knowledge up to date on the latest software and hardware.

Time for Reflection and Sharing

It takes time for teachers to embed new skills. This often means sharing with fellow teachers both technical skills and the application of those skills and techniques to use in various situations. Professional learning communities in schools and districts are often the answer.

Teacher Community

Teachers model good practice for fellow teachers on TeacherTube and YouTube and provide tips and suggestions on SMART Exchange. These materials and interactions provide mentorship for teachers who are new to technology in the classroom or need a question answered.

Training for Students

Sharing the knowledge of Notebook software functionality with students can only help make the use of the tool natural. Not only do most children have an aptitude for technology, they also take a great deal of pride in being able to actively participate in class and assist their teachers.

Summary

Whatever a teacher's learning style, there are tools and services available to assist in the mastery of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and other SMART products. Experimentation, sharing, reflecting, reinforcing – they are all part of the learning experience.

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