



**Kindergarten teacher, Cindy Savio leads her students through their morning message using her SMART Board interactive whiteboard.**

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**Cindy Savio,**  
kindergarten teacher,  
Cameron Elementary School,  
Alexandria, Virginia

## Mixing up SMART's products for improved student achievement

By Heather Ellwood

**Cindy Savio's kindergarten classroom** has a palpable buzz of excitement as her students learn all about the letter T, and most of that buzz centers around the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard. Similarly, in Susan Vienneau's eighth-grade mathematics class, students are eagerly using SMART's Senteo™ interactive response system to answer geometry quiz questions. And in Shawn Schwerman's sixth-grade language arts class, students can't wait to take a turn up at the interactive whiteboard, as they add character descriptors to their concept map.

When it comes to sharing success-in-the-classroom stories, teachers like Savio, Vienneau and Schwerman are quick to mention how much they rely on SMART's products to take their teaching and their students' learning to a higher level. SMART's products, they insist, support and complement their teaching strengths and skills, and help them create a fertile and vibrant learning environment.

There's no doubt that even without any technology in place in their classrooms, these three teachers would be successful, dynamic educators, but give them easy-to-use, intuitive and education-friendly technology tools, there's no stopping them.

### SMART ingredients

Like good chefs, each of them has a mix of ingredients that they prefer. Savio, a veteran with 21 years' experience, who teaches at Cameron Elementary School in Alexandria, Virginia, has a teaching recipe that includes Notebook™ collaborative learning software, SMART Speller software, SMART's Lesson Activity Toolkit, a SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard and of course, a group of ready-to-learn kindergarten students. Savio admits, with the increased pressures that come with standardized testing and the statewide focus on assessment, she relies on SMART products more and more.

In Virginia, K–3 students have a test called the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), which helps teachers and schools identify children in need of additional instruction. Savio also uses PALS as a diagnostic tool to provide her with specific information about what her students know about literary fundamentals, such as phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, letter sounds and word recognition, so she can fine-tune her instruction.

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## Stirring in some numbers

Like Savio, Susan Vienneau, a 20-year teaching veteran at Eleanor W. Graham Middle School (EWG) in Richibucto, New Brunswick, Canada, uses Notebook software to create and build all of her lessons. She also adds other SMART products to the mix in her eighth-grade mathematics class, including the AirLiner™ wireless slate, the Senteo interactive response system, SMART Ideas™ concept-mapping software and SynchronEyes™ classroom management software. These tools, combined with a one-to-one laptop program and Vienneau's incorporation of rich media sources, such as streaming video, virtual manipulatives and websites, make math class an invigorating place to be. And, according to Vienneau, using SMART products in combination with other tools has raised the achievement levels of her math students.

"Raising achievement to me means an increase in student attendance, increased levels of classroom participation and greater student success. When I use SMART products, students participate more and share more immediate feedback. They are tools that help motivate students and create an environment of excitement for learning. In my class, there's a direct link to the use of SMART products and raising achievement," Vienneau explains.

The administration of EWG Middle School has conducted perception surveys with the student population. These polls show a significant improvement in the students' positive attitudes toward subjects since SMART products became standard in the school. Prior to standardizing on SMART, only 60 percent of students had a positive attitude toward their subjects. Those numbers have risen to a respectable 84 percent.

Teachers have long known that if students have a positive attitude toward the subject matter at hand, better results follow quite naturally. Vienneau keeps an eye on how her students are doing when it comes to the math curriculum by using the Senteo interactive response system on a daily basis. As her math class progresses, she periodically plugs in content questions. She says it's a quick, easy and reliable way to ascertain her students' understanding of a math concept and that it's a tool that her students love to get their hands on.

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**Shawn Schwerman, sixth-grade science and language arts teacher, Parkside Junior High, Normal, Illinois**



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**Susan Vienneau, eighth-grade mathematics teacher, Eleanor W. Graham Middle School, Richibucto, New Brunswick, Canada**

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## Adding assessment

The Senteo interactive response system is also a daily feature on the menu in Shawn Schwerman’s sixth-grade science and language arts classroom in Parkside Junior High in Normal, Illinois. Using the lessons she’s created in Notebook software, Schwerman easily pulls questions to use with the Senteo interactive response system. With regular questioning during classes, she is able to quickly assess the knowledge level of her students.

“As I teacher I need to know where my students are at all times and create benchmarks for them to reach. It is important I praise them for making progress, and I find Senteo clickers are the best way to actually see performance levels being raised. I can ask the same questions repeatedly to see how much they have learned. Students appreciate having a part in their education and having some control over the pacing of the lesson,” says Schwerman, and she adds that using the Senteo interactive response system makes her a much more responsive and effective teacher.

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Meeting every student’s needs may require differentiated instruction for various learner groups, believes Savio. In her kindergarten class, she has children from non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as those who come with a firm foundation in English phonetics and literacy skills. By using her SMART Board interactive whiteboard and her Senteo interactive response system, she is able to break her students into four skill groups and assign different tasks for the groups to work through. While she leads one group through a short story or poem, another group will be at the interactive whiteboard using an Adobe® Flash® image of a refrigerator, found in Notebook software’s Gallery, which is essentially a virtual refrigerator with letter magnets. The students in the group at the interactive whiteboard challenge each other to spell various words, which include the phonetics practice of the day – words that have “at” in them, for example. Meanwhile, at the end of story time, Savio tests her group’s comprehension by asking them questions, which they respond to using the system’s remotes. Every facet of her teaching involves SMART products, and the fact that her kindergarten students have near mastery over them is testament to their ease of use.

## Essential tools

Like her colleagues in Illinois and New Brunswick, Savio can’t imagine teaching without her SMART products. Vienneau goes as far as to admit, “If I was transferred to another school that did not have SMART products, I would buy my own!”

Savio and Vienneau would likely agree with Schwerman when she says, “Students are being raised in a world that is filled with digital images and video games. They need a lot of stimulation in order to stay focused. It is up to the teacher to create an environment that competes with the outside world and to keep students involved. SMART products do that.”