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## A SMART way to teach Hopatcong kids

### Award-winning system helps them learn various subjects while having fun

**BY MEGHAN VAN DYK  
DAILY RECORD**

HOPATCONG -- It's a chalkboard without all that dusty chalk, a paper easel without all that pesky paper and a whiteboard without the odor that comes with markers. But the SMART board at Hopatcong's Tulsa Trail Elementary School is even more.

"The SMART boards make work fun," said 8-year-old Anthony Turkington. "It's like we can do anything and go anywhere from the seats in our classroom."

The school of 330 students in Sussex County was recognized by SMART Technologies last week for the way teachers have integrated the interactive white boards into the classroom. Tulsa Trail is one of two New Jersey schools and 80 nationwide to be named a SMART Showcase School.

The award is thanks to third-grade teacher Danielle Kovach, who helped bring the boards into all 23 of the school's classrooms and who applied for the grant last year. It netted her an iPod Shuffle and a \$16,000 package, including a new 77-inch SMART Board for her classroom.

"Kids are changing the way they are learning, and we have to adapt to that," Kovach said. "I use it the majority of the day because it adds dimensions to the learning process."

Three years ago, the school had just four boards that were carted from room to room, according to Principal Jeff Nesnay. Soon, groups of teachers requested their own.

"It was a bottom-up effort," Nesnay said. "It was expensive, but we were lucky to have the right resources available at the right time, by finding ways to cut corners in our own budget, then by going to the Parent-Teacher Organization and the superintendent's office."

The setup costs about \$2,000 for each classroom, which includes the SMART Board, projector and software, he said. The school already had up-to-date Macs in every classroom.

"You don't really get it until you use one," said Mike Neu, also a third-grade teacher at Tulsa Trail. "The kids are not just sitting with their arms crossed saying, 'I get it.' They're having a blast. And they're learning better."

Kieaun DePew's favorite exercise on the SMART Board is "Hangman."

Everything the 8-year-old needs is right in front of her on the white board, on an interface custom-made by Kovach.

After a classmate calls out a letter, her fingers gingerly slide it to the pre-drawn dotted line or to the bottom of

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Jared Schuman, 8, plays 'I Spy' on the SMART board at Hopatcong's Tulsa Trail Elementary School.

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Third-grade teacher Danielle Kovach, left, uses a SMART board to instruct her students at the Tulsa Trail School in Hopatcong. At right, Jared Schuman, 8, plays 'I Spy' on the SMART board. 'I use it the majority of the day because it adds dimensions to the learning process,' Kovach said of the SMART board.

the screen. The hangman's various body parts and clothing -- including a top hat -- are all there.

Kovach likes it, too, because the game is a vocabulary quiz in disguise, she said.

It works the same for subtraction exercises and practicing penmanship. Videos can be streamed from the Internet, transporting the class from Ellis Island to the Kennedy Space Center and back.

"At home, they're on computers all the time. Even their TV shows direct them to the computer," Neu said.

"They're able to see, touch and hear whatever they're learning about. Not to mention it's fun for the teachers, too."

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