

Interactive Products Division Numonics Corporation **Case Studies**



Bundled Technology Package Enhances Education and Saves District Money

Case Study by Ellen Kollie

Administrators at Conroe ISD in Conroe, Texas, know a good financial deal when they see it. In this case, the good deal is a Numonics IPM whiteboard combined with RM Easiteach software at the price of the whiteboard alone.

What Conroe administrators didn't know was how significantly the whiteboard/software bundle would enhance education.

The Learning Curve

The district of 45,000 students on 49 campuses built two new schools last year and had money left over to buy interactive whiteboards. "I had to research and furnish quotes on three different brands of whiteboards," explains Jan Robin, Conroe's Instructional Technology Specialist. "I learned that the Numonics Interactive Presentation Manger (IPM) interactive whiteboard is coupled with RM Easiteach software, which I had never seen. So, we did a phone conference with the Easiteach folks to learn what it could do."

Here's what Robin learned. The Interactive Presentation Manager (IPM) interactive whiteboard is manufactured by Montgomeryville, Pa.-based Numonics. When integrated incorporated with a computer and data projector, the IPM becomes a powerful teaching tool. For example, by touching the whiteboard surface with an electronic pen, the teacher controls the computer environment in real time. All program functions are transferred to the pen, thus enabling the teacher to stay in front of the class without touching the computer. Plus, it is equipped with 17 user-



definable Softkeys, located on both sides, that teachers can define to launch web sites, applications, files, keyboard commands and 14 different Presentation Tools.

Robin also learned that Easiteach software, designed by teachers for teachers, is manufactured by RM Educational Software Inc., Marstons Mills, Mass. It is specifically designed for use on interactive whiteboards across a wide range of grade levels. Teachers create compelling lessons and stimulating activities via subject-focused toolbars for Math, English Language Arts, Science and Geography. Or teachers can choose from a range of ready-made content packs in Math, Language Arts and Science. There's even a fun Games pack.

“That’s the beauty of the software and the board,” Lahey points out. “It gives the students an opportunity to participate in a different way. It’s manipulative and interactive. It’s empowering.”

Easiteach has a variety of features for flexibility. For example, each RM Easibook can have up to 99 pages. Plus, teachers can change the color, size and type of font; import video, photographs and sound clips; make their own animations; and use their existing Word and Excel files.

“Ultimately,” Robin says enthusiastically, “the bundled package was as cost effective as buying another brand of whiteboard without the software, and we really liked the software. That cinched the deal.” The district purchased 100 bundles and spread them over all grade levels and campuses for equity.

Making the Grade

Teachers throughout Conroe ISD wasted no time enhancing education by getting their bundles up and running immediately. Kellie Lahey, a third grade (math, science and social studies) teacher at Conroe’s Lamar Elementary School has hers mounted in her classroom. Fortunately, the school has a second bundle that was purchased with different funds and is shared.

“I create math lessons using Easiteach,” Lahey says enthusiastically. “Then we rotate the interactive whiteboard on a rolling stand among the six third-grade classrooms so that all the teachers have the opportunity to use the lesson and learn how to use the board.

“The kids are learning how to use it, too,” Lahey continues excitedly. “Recently, one of the teachers didn’t know how to do something, and I wasn’t able to assist her. Later, I asked if she figured it out, and she said that one of the students helped!

“That’s the beauty of the software and the board,” Lahey points out. “It gives the students an opportunity to participate in a different way. It’s manipulative and interactive. It’s empowering.”

Robin agrees, noting, “In terms of the ‘Wow!’ factor of both teachers and students,’ it’s tremendous. Learning to use the software and whiteboard is an excellent problem-solving activity for the students. I recently saw students learning to recalibrate the interactive whiteboard. Then they used Easiteach software to play a math game. They were both excited and attentive!”

In her own classroom, Lahey appreciates how simple Easiteach is to use for lesson design, noting that it’s compatible with standard lesson organization. “When I set up my Easiteach cards, I have one with a lesson introduction,” she explains. “The next one states what our goal is. The third one is instructional input. The fourth card is practice.” After the class has practiced together, the students do individual work at their desks. At the end of the lesson, Lahey shows the fifth card, which is closure.

Robin also appreciates Easiteach’s simplicity. She points out that, because Easiteach is so friendly, teachers use the content that’s already there—or use its tools, including bar graphs, spreadsheets and word processing—as opposed to creating original learning lessons.

Passing the Test—Of Time

When it comes to planning lessons, and using Easiteach software and the IPM whiteboard, Conroe administrators wanted to be sure teachers were set up to succeed. In addition to training on both the software and the whiteboard, a shared conference folder is available on the district server where teachers can post questions and provide support to one another. “The Easiteach education trainer also has access to the folder,” Robin points out. “That’s been a tremendous benefit. There simply has to be continued training, the opportunity to review the software and hardware, and to share with one another.”

This approach is working well, as teachers are enthusiastically navigating and implementing the bundle. The reception has been so strong that the district desires to put a bundle in every classroom.

At Lamar Elementary, the first step is getting one bundle for every grade, with the kindergarten and first grades sharing one. And Lahey is confident the technology will continue to be embraced by the teachers. “I don’t think people will say, ‘That’s nice,’ and it will be out of style in a few years. I think it’s here to stay.” And, the Numonics interactive whiteboard is the only product that offers a limited lifetime warranty to schools.

That’s a value all administrators have to love as they seek to enhance education and save money.