Interactive Products Division
Numonics Corporation **Case Studies**

IPM Interactive Whiteboard Brings Remedial Reading Help to Kindergarteners

Case Study by Ellen Kollie

How do you take a group of under-performing kindergarteners and bring their reading skills up to par in time for spring testing? At Harrison Elementary School in Harrison, Idaho, it is done with a remedial program and a lot of help from a Numonics interactive whiteboard.

Normally, the school's administrators would offer the catch-up program during the summer, just before the beginning of the new school year. This year, a decision was made to offer the program during the school year, after school, in an attempt to improve the student's grades before spring testing.

"At first, some of the parents were hesitant because the program was scheduled from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., twice a week for 10 weeks, and they were afraid it was going to be too much for the kindergarteners to handle," says Shannon LaFountaine, who teaches second grade at Harrison and taught the remedial program.

"We started with 11 out of 18 students below where they needed to be," says LaFountaine. "Eight of the 11 students participated in the program. And, when it ended, all eight were where they needed to be for spring testing."

To teach the kindergarteners, LaFountaine relied heavily on an Interactive Presentation Manager (IPM) whiteboard from Montgomeryville, PA-based Numonics Corporation. The IPM is a powerful teaching tool when incorporated with a computer and a data projector. 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, which teachers can define to launch web sites, applications, files, keyboard commands and 14 different Presentation Tools.

Getting Off to a Strong Start

At Harrison Elementary, there is one class for each grade, kindergarten through sixth. Last summer, five IPMs were purchased and set up in the first, second, third, fourth and sixth grade classes. “We bought the whiteboards through a grant that our principal wrote,” says LaFountaine. “She’s proactive in technology and had earmarked money because it was an interest of ours.”

LaFountaine and the third grade teacher got the school year off to a strong start with the help of the IPMs. “The other three teachers made progress as they saw us using them. They came to us with questions,” she says.

In fact, LaFountaine became so comfortable with the interactive whiteboard that she now has two electronic textbooks that she can display on the IPM screen. The books feature E-tools that pull up electronic math tools like rulers. “With the electronic textbooks, I can interact with the whiteboard and see my class — and they can see what I’m teaching,” she says. “I have complete mobility. Now it’s a priority for us when we order new textbooks to order electronic editions because they’re so useful with our Numonics boards.”

Improving Reading Scores

When it came to teaching the kindergarteners, LaFountaine made a PowerPoint presentation with 26 slides, one for each letter of the alphabet. “I’d go through the PowerPoint and have the students say the letters in random order for letter recognition,” she points out. “Then we’d write words on each slide that start with the sound of that letter. For instance, we might write ‘bear’ on the ‘B’ slide. Then I’d save it. The next time we met, we’d review the slides and add more words.

“I used the same concept for color words to help with recognition of sight words,” LaFountaine continues. “For instance, initially, the word ‘blue’ was in the color blue. Later, I took away the color and had the words in black. It was like having flashcards on PowerPoint.

“I also made a PowerPoint presentation of number words for recognition of those sight words,” she says enthusiastically. “Initially, each slide had the number and the word on it. I would tell the kids to look at the word ‘seven.’ It has a ‘V’ in it, and I would have the ‘V’ in a different color. Later, I took away the number, but left the word and changed it to a solid color so the ‘V’ didn’t stand out. And I would ask the kids which color word has the ‘V’ sound in it. The children could cue in both visually and verbally.”

In addition to making her own PowerPoint presentations, LaFountaine used a number of web sites in teaching the kindergarteners. One was starfall.com, which features learn-to-read activities. “Because I could show the web site on the whiteboard, we could do the activities together as a class,” she says, noting that this was more preferable than having the students work one-at-a-time on a single computer. “I would call on different students to take the pen and click and drag to group rhyming words.”

Another web site LaFountaine made use of is edhelper.com. This site has pre-done letter writing. She could show the web site on the whiteboard and use the pen to trace over the letters, thus modeling the correct way for the students to make the letters. Then the students would practice making the letters on paper at their desks. “I didn’t have to make overheads,” she notes. “And I could use different colors, especially red, to make my letters stand out.

“I used the whiteboard in one fashion or another almost the entire two hours the students were there,” LaFountaine continues. “It kept their attention, even after a full day of school. In fact, when I did the alphabet PowerPoint presentation, they got so loud that they could be heard through the walls into the room next door!”

Not only were the students excited, but their parents were thrilled as they saw the progress their students were making. “They raved about it,” LaFountaine recalls.

In fact, the program, and the interactive whiteboard, were such a success that the decision has already been made to offer the program during the school year again next year.

Changing the Way Teaching Is Done

LaFountaine credits the IPM’s versatility for the program’s success. “You can change simple things like the pen color to group things together instantly,” she notes. “I’ve got Softkeys formatted for different subject areas. For instance, when I teach math, the pen size needs to be a small width, so I have it formatted. I don’t have to go looking for anything.”

Another advantage the IPM offers that LaFountaine especially likes is the ability to be organized. “I can save things and come back to them later,” she says. “And I have created files that I can print off for the students or show on the screen.”

In one short year of use, the IPM has changed the way LaFountaine teaches — for the better. “I depend on the whiteboard,” she says. “We recently had a power outage, and I had to go back to a more traditional way of teaching by standing in front of the classroom. It’s more difficult to hold up a ruler and try to show the students how to measure with it than it is to show a ruler on the whiteboard and point out the measurements.”

“I use the whiteboard all the time for everything,” LaFountaine sums. “It’s fun. It’s exciting. It’s instant. It’s efficient, organized and interactive. And it captivates the students.”