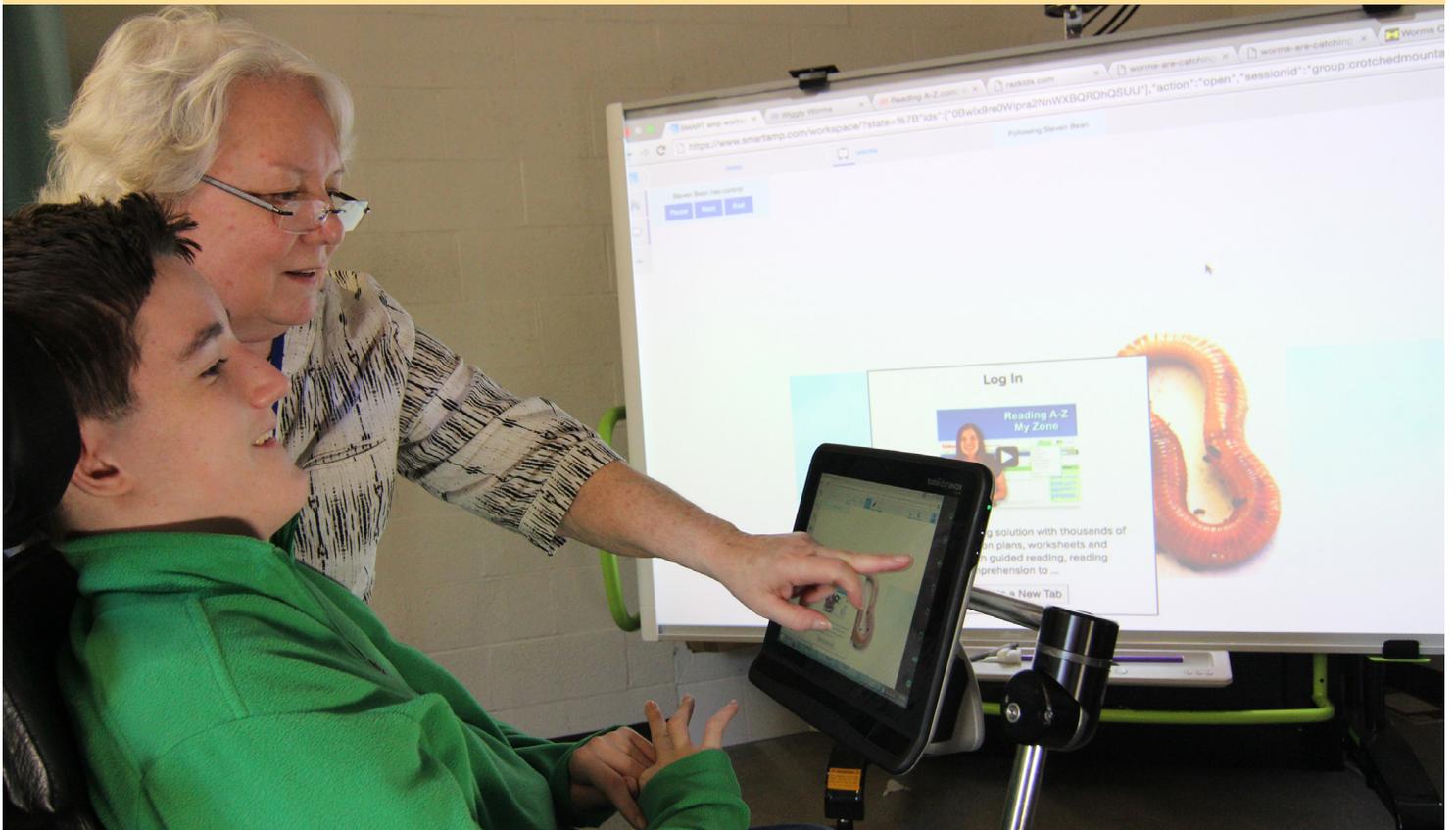




Teaching Tips and Strategies: Using SMART Boards in Classrooms to Engage and Support Learning in Students with Disabilities



Looking for ideas to engage and improve learning in your students with diverse needs and abilities? Using a SMART Board interactive white board in your classroom can be a beneficial tool for everyone - it offers multiple ways to teach and interact with your students; and, it offers students with disabilities and special needs multiple ways to learn material, express their ideas and demonstrate their understanding. By supporting an inclusive learning environment, SMART Board technology can provide students of all abilities the opportunity to participate in learning while at the same time meeting universal design for learning standards.

Here are some tips and techniques:

Keep It Interactive

By design, SMART Boards are interactive because of their touch-sensitive surface. Combine that with increased visual stimulation, enhanced sound and video capacity, and the ability to create and adjust activities to adapt to a student's learning, and you can create a highly engaging teaching environment. With interactive lessons in reading, math, science and more, you can customize lessons and address your students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles and teach to each student's strengths and interests.

Using a SMART Board can help students with autism improve communication skills through group collaboration. For students with physical disabilities and those who cannot hold a pen or pencil, the SMART Board's touch-sensitive surface enables them to write and interact with content using the finger-touch capability. For students who have trouble using traditional keyboards and mice, the touch and click ease allows them to interact with a computer and stay engaged in the lesson. It is very rewarding to see a student begin to initiate activities on their own as they get more comfortable with the technology.

Keep It Multi-Sensory

Julia has always found that the more sensory systems are involved in learning, the more a student will remember. Since students with special needs frequently respond well to visuals, the SMART Board takes this one step further by projecting really large images. As a teacher, that means you can project worksheets, pictures for background knowledge or web-based content for the entire class.

A great example of this is teaching the solar system. You can visually present information using large images and color, highlight the text and read it aloud using corresponding audio. Make it interactive by having the student come to the board, touch the planet, pull it out and put it into a category such as size. Students can even switch to the digital pencil on the board and write the name of planet with their fingertips. Those students who have mobility issues can interact with the SMART Board through their communication device. It's a great way for them to be involved and for you to understand how your students learn best.

Use the Web for Resources

SMART amp is a great online resource to develop interactive lesson activities and plans. *Discovery Education* is another amazing website offering a variety of interactive SMART Board activities. For every lesson, the topics of learning, objective and assessments are included, in compliance with evidence-based practices and in line with Universal Design for Learning.

Teachers who have used interactive SMART Boards report that students with special needs are more focused, more actively involved in the learning process and have made huge strides in learning. If your school does not have a SMART Board, advocate for one today.

What is a SMART Board and how does it work?

SMART Boards are large interactive whiteboards that were invented in 1991 by SMART Technologies. The SMART Board uses touch technology to detect user input, as compared to mice and keyboards. A computer's video output is displayed by a projector onto the whiteboard, which serves as a large touchscreen. For educational purposes, the interactive whiteboard mounts on a wall or sits on a floor stand and uses digital ink writing instruments for handwriting and drawing.

While most users do require some training, most people can walk up and start using a SMART Board immediately. A SMART Board does not require any special software. It may be important to note that the use of Windows based AAC devices in Smart Classrooms is relatively new and related to Smart Technology's introduction of Smart amp. For a student accessing the SMARTamp.com using a device that is Windows based, they must activate a link on SMART amp if they wish to further explore the activity on a different site.

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