

Students *and* Teacher get Aha! Moments with Interactive Whiteboard and Aha!Math

North Carolina elementary school teacher shares her tips and enthusiasm for using an interactive whiteboard with supplemental math curriculum

Kelly Crowley is excited about the newest tools in her teacher toolbox. In March she was delighted to get an interactive whiteboard in her classroom. She finds the whiteboard is the perfect complement to Aha!Math, a Web-delivered, supplemental math curriculum from Learning.com that has helped her engage her students to make strides in their math skills.

More Participation and Interaction

Kelly, who teaches fourth and fifth-grade students, enjoys teaching, but struggles, as all teachers do, with getting across some of those tougher concepts in math. With an interactive whiteboard and Aha!Math, she's found her students participate more and get over those trouble-spots in, for example, decimal place value, that often leave many students struggling.

"I get better participation because students want to interact with the whiteboard and come up to the front of the class to put in their answers," she says. "When I use Aha!Math with the whiteboard the whole class ends up participating — even kids who sit at the back of the room who don't like to talk or raise their hand. They love it."

Before Kelly got the whiteboard and a projector for her classroom, students had to go to the computer lab to use Aha!Math. While students always were excited to

play Aha!Math's engaging and interactive games in the lab, having them in the computer lab didn't allow Kelly to effectively use its instruction modules with the whole class or small groups. Now that the whiteboard is in place, she uses Aha!Math as an integral part of her math instruction.

For example, Kelly likes to use Aha!Math's instruction modules and lessons with the whole class, but when it comes time for Aha!Math's digital coaches to give an answer, Kelly pauses the program and lets her students shout the answers with the digital coach.

"I can do a quick auditory assessment and note who is still being quiet and just how well students are responding. That lets me know in a real quick check how we're doing getting a particular concept," she says.

Presenting Concepts in New Ways

Because she's using the instructional modules with the whiteboard, she can pause Aha!Math at any time and write on the whiteboard.

"I can, for example, show another strategy of my own right in the middle of the lesson to increase their understanding, then move on," she says.

She's also learned new strategies herself through Aha!Math. "I had never taught multiplication using a numberline, so it's a whole new way for my students to see the equal groups."

Kelly also uses Aha!Math with the whiteboard when she sees students are not understanding. "I stop, load Aha!Math, and present it another way."

Aha!Math and the whiteboard also provide the class with variety that makes learning more fun.

“It’s a way to stir things up in the day, and get the kids more involved in what we’re learning. It adds variety to a regular math lesson, something new.”

But Kelly adds that just because Aha!Math is engaging and colorful doesn’t mean she would use it if it were not effective.

“I feel it is very effective. My children have a very firm grasp, for example, on the decimal curriculum. They weren’t getting it with just me teaching them with the normal lecture, listen and practice class. But when I added Aha!Math to the mix I could see the light bulbs going off.”

Kelly also has found that the whiteboard helps her students pay better attention to the math lesson at the front of the room. When she was instructing in the computer lab, students were consistently distracted by the computers in front of them at their stations. Because the whiteboard is in her classroom, Kelly has much better control of the class, she says.

Most important, because of the way Aha!Math is structured, she still makes the decisions for how and when to use it to support all her learners.

Whiteboard Integration

“I am still teaching the class — not the computer. I am still engaged with my students. Aha!Math is like a new version of a textbook, but it’s not boring. I’ve got new ways to present the curriculum, but I don’t have to invent something new,” she says.

In fact, she’s found Aha!Math is like having a teaching assistant.

“I haven’t had to do anything but look through the curriculum in Aha!Math and plan what concepts I want to cover. I don’t have to create it myself. It’s all right there ready to go and ready to use with the whiteboard.”

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—Kelly Crowley, fourth and fifth-grade teacher
Pine Valley Elementary School
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