

Young Learners Move to the Head of the Class in Math With Kidspiration 3

When her fourth-grade students started last school year with an average score of just 43 percent on state math benchmark tests, teacher Jennifer Patgorski was determined to find a way to engage them in learning so they could achieve at the levels she knew were possible. Today, the 112 students who pass through her classroom each day at John Tyler Elementary, part of Portsmouth Public Schools near Norfolk, Va., are reaching brand-new heights. Now with math test scores in the 80s, her students are realizing the greatest level of improvement in their school.

Patgorski credits the math tools in Kidspiration® 3, the visual way to explore words, numbers and concepts, with her students' academic transformation. It all began after her colleague Brian McKee, a district technology resource teacher, suggested that Kidspiration might be the answer for her

students, who were having difficulty focusing on math instruction. "Brian only had to show me Kidspiration once, and I was so excited that I stayed after school until 7:00 that night to see what it could do," she said.

Three weeks into the school year, Patgorski's students began using Kidspiration on the laptops in her classroom. Her first order of business was subtraction, a concept that was new to many of her students. After she used Kidspiration Base Ten Blocks™ to demonstrate the concept on an interactive whiteboard, her students

quickly caught on and are now able to subtract with numbers in the millions. "They were able to split up the tens, and they became 10 ones. They could actually see the regrouping," she explained. "They said, 'wow, that was amazing.'"

Patgorski said Wednesday is her students' favorite day of the week because they learn with Kidspiration. "On Wednesdays, they're better behaved and more

on task because using Kidspiration is a reward for them. When you pass out a worksheet, you have some who fill in answers just to get it done. This is a technology generation, and they learn so much more when we meet them where they are."

Each week she introduces a new concept, and the next one will be fractions—a subject that will be easy to teach with Kidspiration Fraction Tiles™ and Kidspiration Fraction Boxes™, said Patgorski. "I found several fractions

activities that are great—and the kids will really like them. I've put together my lesson plans for the next few months, and I have yet to find anything that I can't teach with Kidspiration," she said.

When her students took a recent assessment on multiplication, more than 85 percent passed, a number rarely seen so early in the school year. "We used Kidspiration to acclimate them to what multiplying really means," said Patgorski. "They could see why eight times four is 32. Kidspiration makes it more relatable."



Created for K-5 learners, Kidspiration develops thinking, literacy and numeracy skills using proven visual learning principles. In reading and writing, Kidspiration strengthens word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension and written expression. With the new visual math tools in Kidspiration 3, students build a strong mathematical foundation for reasoning and problem-solving by using visual representations to understand math concepts. Combining the hands-on learning power of manipulatives with the benefits of computer interactivity, Kidspiration gives students the tools to grasp essential and sometimes challenging math concepts.

Patgorski finds Kidspiration reaches students of every learning ability—from special education to advanced students. Even students with the most severe disabilities—those who require help from paraprofessionals to navigate the school day—are able to use Kidspiration, she said. “I put them on Kidspiration and they are able to fully participate, 100 percent, doing the exact same thing as everyone else. You can imagine how that makes them feel.”

Word is spreading about Kidspiration at John Tyler

Elementary, said Patgorski, and another teacher will be using it to teach math soon. Patgorski’s been telling other teachers about it—and suggesting they try it with science, social studies and reading, too. “When I’m using it, I leave my door wide open so everyone can see how wonderful I am,” she said with a laugh.

McKee, also, has been inspiring other district elementary teachers to try Kidspiration, and foresees more and more adoptions. “My push is to integrate technology as a resource that is part of the day—to get away from ‘drill and kill,’ which teachers and students are tired of,” he said.

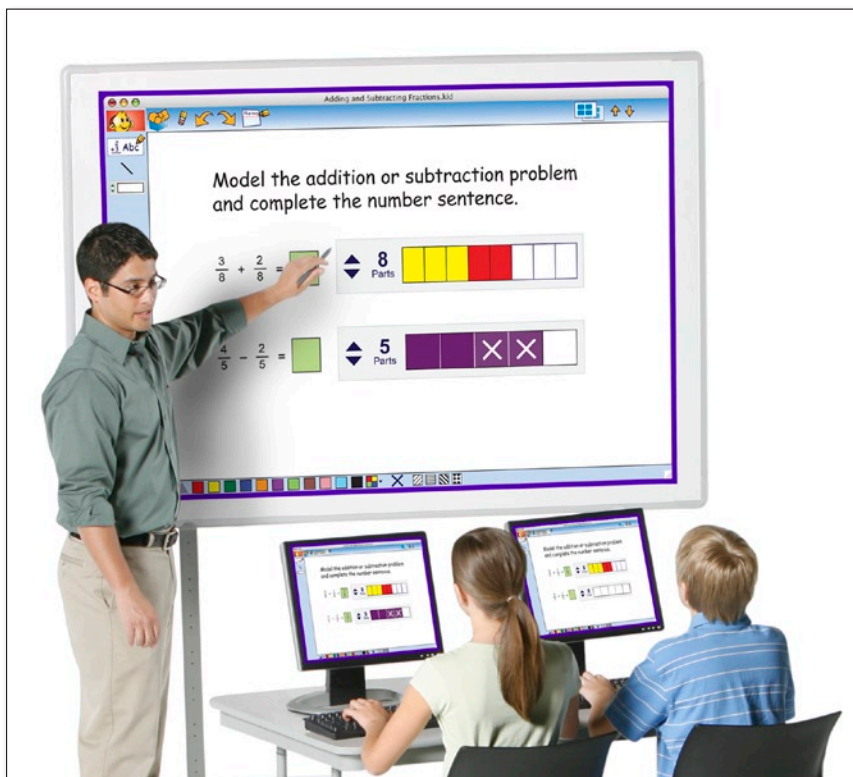
In this district of more than 15,000 students, McKee oversees the technology needs of 1,100 students and 80 teachers. With approximately half of the students in the district qualifying for free or reduced lunch, many have struggles at home that make it difficult to focus at school. “These students need that little spark—we need to take them beyond the worksheet,” he said.

And when students are engaged in learning, class management is much easier, said McKee. After he brought Kidspiration to Patgorski’s math classes, “everyone was on task,” he said. “When one student

started to be disruptive, she told him if he didn’t shape up, he’d have to do his work with paper and pencil. You can’t believe how quickly he snapped into shape.”

Perhaps the best part of using Kidspiration is the plentiful opportunities it provides for “light-bulb moments,” said McKee. “When you see that teachable moment and the student says, ‘I get it,’ that’s why we went into teaching.”

At a recent district technology training day, the largest turnout was for a session on Kidspiration 3, he said. “The reaction was, ‘oh, my—that is amazing,’” said McKee. “We had teachers and paraprofessionals from all over the city come in to see it. When they tried it, you could feel their excitement as they discussed the ways they could use it to reach their students in all subjects.”



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