

Kidspiration® on an interactive whiteboard inspires media specialist's return to the classroom

At Clairemont Elementary School in Decatur, Ga., kindergarteners enter a world of visual experiences, full of new opportunities to develop skills and learning patterns that will inspire students to become life-long learners. These learning opportunities, offered by the combination of visual learning with the latest classroom technology, motivated former media specialist Heather Borowski to become a kindergarten teacher. Borowski uses Kidspiration® 2.1 with a Promethean ActivBoard to provide interactive lessons, teach new information, practice key concepts and excite students about learning.

Kidspiration trade show presentation inspires media specialist to teach

While attending the 2004 Florida Education Technology Conference in Orlando, Borowski—a library media specialist at the time—watched a presentation of Kidspiration 2.1 on a Promethean ActivBoard. “My head was spinning as I watched the presentation on the exhibit hall floor,” says Borowski. “I felt strongly that my students had to have the opportunity to learn this way.”

After returning from the conference, Borowski was instrumental in convincing her principal to attend a presentation and consequently purchase ActivBoards for four classrooms. The school's instructional computers were already equipped with Kidspiration 2 licenses.

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—Heather Borowski

Borowski was so captivated by the possibilities provided by a “21st Century Classroom” that she asked to transfer into the classroom as a teacher while continuing to mentor fellow teachers. Her principal agreed. The following year, Borowski moved into a kindergarten classroom equipped with four instructional computers and an interactive whiteboard.



Heather Borowski's kindergarten students explore Kidspiration on an interactive whiteboard.

Visual learning and technology benefit all types of learners

Borowski's classroom is comprised of a diverse mix of learners. Kidspiration meets the student's needs, with features optimized for interactive whiteboards: toolbars that move to the bottom of the screen for easy access by students; and the ability to sketch symbols, draw links and write text directly on the whiteboard. Borowski believes the principles of visual learning are the key to helping her students learn. “Along with hearing words read aloud, the visual learning aspect of Kidspiration is helping my special needs students connect words with meaning,” says Borowski. “Plus, the tactile, kinesthetic nature of Kidspiration, where students get to physically move things around on the screen and associate actions with results, is great for all students at this age.”

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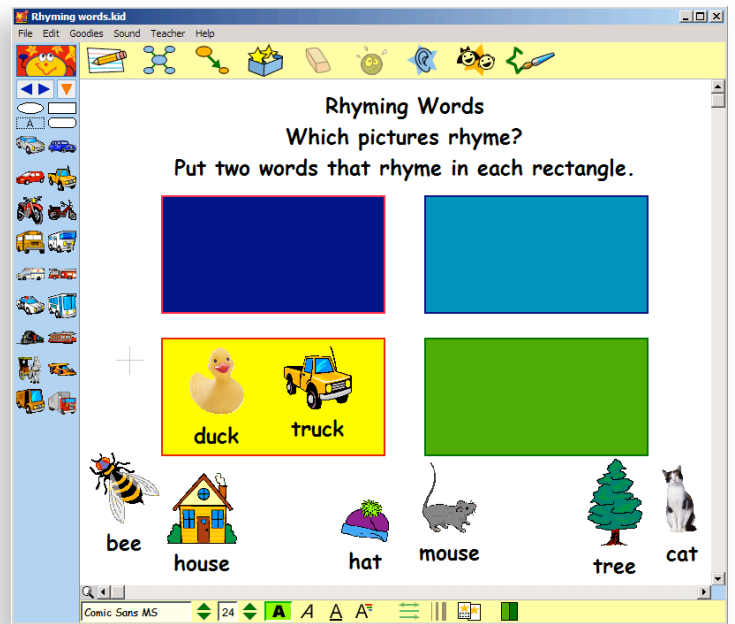
Borowski likes Kidspiration for its intuitive interface, its integrated Picture and Writing Views, the 1,200 kid-friendly symbols organized into libraries, and her favorite: Symbol Maker. According to Borowski, at the beginning of the school year most of the students do not have the ability to draw symbols with a mouse, but they have no problems using a stylus to create their own symbols on the whiteboard.

During the first weeks of this school year, the students used Kidspiration for an introductory “all about me” activity. First, the class did a whole group exercise to learn about Kidspiration and to practice moving things around on the board. Then Borowski brought students individually to the whiteboard to draw pictures using Kidspiration’s Symbol Maker. “The students love using Kidspiration,” says Borowski. “It’s so bright and colorful and interactive. They can personalize their diagrams by drawing their own face or a dog that looks like their dog.”

Sharing Kidspiration with other educators

Other teachers in the school requested help from Borowski in integrating Kidspiration into the curriculum. She worked with a second-grade teacher to create a unit on community helpers that incorporated Kidspiration. Students began by brainstorming questions they wanted to answer as part of a KWL chart in Kidspiration. After gathering research, students created graphic organizers that answered their questions. “Students had a clear picture of how to organize their research,” Borowski adds. “And the outline version of their graphic organizer was a literal diving board for their writing.”

Students finished the project by completing their KWL charts and writing a book about the community helpers. According to Borowski, the second-grade teacher was



Borowski creates sorting and grouping activities as practice and assessment tools.

thrilled with the lesson’s success and repeated it again the following year. “She loved it,” said Borowski, “the way Kidspiration helped her students to organize their knowledge, the way she could easily assess what they learned and the way it motivated her students.”

Kidspiration’s versatility and variety of learning benefits gave Borowski ideas for ways to use the software in her own classroom. She plans to use Kidspiration for letter and phonics recognition, rhyming words and other sorting and categorizing activities in a variety of subjects, such as sorting fruits and vegetables into SuperGrouper® categories. “Kindergarteners are fearless when it comes to technology; they do things intuitively,” says Borowski. “Kidspiration helps my students to take that natural ability and develop skills and learning techniques that will help them be successful throughout their lives.”



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