



## Harrison Elementary School Stepping Into the Light

*"The SMART Board allows me to maintain the attention of my audience, be more resourceful, integrate other technologies more efficiently and allow for greater time-management."*

### Background

Abdel Gutiérrez is a teacher and computer specialist at Harrison Elementary School in Trenton, New Jersey. Harrison Elementary is one of the smaller schools in Trenton with a great deal of history in the community. However, Abdel doesn't want to live in the past when it comes to bringing new technology into the classroom. He uses the SMART Board to teach his kindergarten to grade 4 students about computer technology and to review lessons in other subjects, such as math and language arts.

### Coming Out of the Dark

In the past, Abdel used an LCD panel in the school's Apple® 2GS lab to display overheads on a screen. Abdel wasn't satisfied with this arrangement. "I had the LCD panel, but my screen never came to life and the room had to be almost pitch black in order to see the screen clearly." To be near the computer, he had to be hidden in a corner of the class. Needless to say, this was not a very convenient or effective arrangement when teaching a class full of seven-year-olds. Since acquiring the SMART Board, Abdel feels he has stepped into the light, literally, because he can leave most of the lights on and still see the images on the Board clearly!

*"I'm able to use the SMART Board as one big computer and introduce new topics and programs more effectively. All the students are in front of me, and I'm able to see and interact more with them."*

### A Musical Journey Around the World

A typical day's lesson plan might include a tour of musical instruments from around the world using the CD-ROM *Musical Instruments* from Microsoft®. One by one, the students have their turn at the SMART Board, presenting their choice of instrument, including a discussion of the country of origin. As part of their presentation, they play a little song of their own creation or select a song from that particular country. The class time is spent going from one part of the world to another talking about a wide variety of musical instruments. According to Abdel, the students love it. "Their faces light up with fulfillment, curiosity and accomplishment," he says.

*"The desire to use technology to improve the classroom environment and motivate students is a more important factor than the degree of computer competency."*

### Students Helping Students

Abdel is very impressed with how the SMART Board has turned 25 students on 25 computers into one group working together on a shared project. When he first introduced his students to the Board, Abdel expected them to be very eager to touch it and experiment. What surprised him, however, was the interactive environment it created among his students. He discovered that, "the students worked together and helped one another, converting my lesson into a cooperative learning experience."

### Motivation Is the Key

When asked if teachers need a high level of computer technology experience to use the SMART Board in their classroom, Abdel replied that a higher level of motivation along with a moderate level of computer knowledge is the best combination. In fact, Abdel had his Board up and running within an hour of receiving it. Talk about motivation and desire!