

SMART Showcase School Profile

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Professional development a top priority in New Mexico school district

By Deena Zenyk



“As educators, we are learning as many new things each day as our students are. Without professional development, we would not be able to provide the education our students need to prosper as productive employees in the future.”

Wendy Vasquez

Third-Grade Teacher
Cielo Azul Elementary School
Rio Rancho, New Mexico

In fall 2001, [Rio Rancho Public Schools \(RRPS\)](#) in New Mexico purchased its first two SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards. SMART was chosen because of three critical factors: ease of use, curriculum support and the number of experienced SMART users in the district. Administrators at RRPS knew from the start that the key to a successful district-wide implementation of SMART products would be adequate and consistent professional development for educators at all experience levels. The district has since purchased 401 additional SMART Board interactive whiteboards, firmly establishing that education technology training is not just important – it is essential.

“Rio Rancho Public Schools has a tremendous education technology program,” says Paul Romero, executive director of information technology. “Level II and III teachers are placed in each school, with their primary focus being to help educators in their building get familiar with education technology. Incredible outcomes come from implementing education technology in the classroom correctly while focusing on student achievement.”

Teachers at RRPS are offered many opportunities for training on SMART products throughout the year, and sample lesson activities are provided to new users to get them started. Experienced users share lessons and tips with their colleagues, and parents and students have come to expect SMART products to be part of the learning process.

“Without professional development, Rio Rancho Public Schools would lose the cutting edge focus that we have on giving students the best opportunities to learn and retain information,” Romero adds. “Using technology helps us further the knowledge of our children in a way that is real and pertinent to their success in our society today.”

Education technology specialists play crucial role

One key reason for the success of RRPS was its decision five years ago to create education technology specialist (ETS) positions. Each school in the district has its own dedicated ETS, who ensures that teachers have the support they need to integrate technology seamlessly in the classroom. An ETS provides professional development and support to staff, and coordinates the collection, analysis and processing of critical assessment data through technology. These specialists also facilitate the integration of technology in support of school curriculum.

“Our experience ranges from teaching kindergarten through to adult education. The main job of an ETS is to support staff in technology professional development,” says Terri Meier, ETS at Eagle Ridge Middle School. “Educators can contact their ETS at any time to receive one-on-one or small-group training based on their individual needs, and education technology specialists are consistently offering training on software and equipment to their staff members.”



If you'd like to visit Rio Rancho Public Schools to talk with educators about their success and see firsthand how they're using SMART products, visit the [SMART Showcase School section of our website](#). You can also locate a [Showcase School or District](#) in your area.

Before receiving a SMART Board interactive whiteboard, all teachers must complete an introductory training class with the ETS at their school and sign up for two more advanced training classes later in the year. Professional development in RRPS is valued as an integral part of the education process. As technology becomes more advanced, the training the district provides becomes more extensive – RRPS teachers are constantly striving to master the latest technology available to boost student success. Education technology specialists help teachers expand their expertise, enhancing instruction and student learning.

Third-grade Cielo Azul Elementary School teacher Wendy Vasquez agrees: "As educators, we are learning as many new things each day as our students are. Without professional development, we would not be able to provide the education our students need to prosper as productive employees in the future."

At RRPS, professional development provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate. They share ideas more now than they did five years ago, and they rely on each other's expertise to develop new learning activities. According to Vasquez, the support given to education technology training across the district makes it all work.

"An important part of the professional development process is the commitment of the administrators. At RRPS, the use of SMART products is emphasized and consistently revisited and communicated as a priority."

If you visit one of the Rio Rancho Public Schools or any other SMART Showcase School between now and June 15, 2009, you could win a product prize package from SMART. [Find out more.](#) **EC**

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