



Ohio Students Step Into Digital Classroom

Sam Hendren, WOSU Reporter



7th grade teacher Sean Holland using an electronic interactive whiteboard

keyboards, it's the pen!"

COLUMBUS, OH (2006-09-15) 75% of classrooms in the United Kingdom are using multi-media computer technology to help teach students. In Ohio that number is only 2%. At John Sells Middle School in Dublin teachers have begun incorporating digital instruction into their lessons. School officials say they don't yet have concrete data to gauge the effectiveness of digital learning. But they say they're encouraged by what they've seen so far.

Teacher Sean Holland and his 7th grade science class were too involved in a metrics competition to be distracted by observers in the room. Holland's students are learning to make conversions within the metric system. Instead of standing in front of a blackboard teaching, Holland steps aside while teams select answers on an interactive screen at the front of the class.

"The kids are jumping out of their seats to come up to the board," Holland says. "To them it's the biggest computer in the world. And it's not

The students select their answers using a special pen that functions as a mouse on an electronic whiteboard. As questions flash on the screen, the computer tallies the number of correct answers, and it also calculates how quickly each student responds. Holland says he's impressed by his students' enthusiasm.

"They want to be the next one up," Holland says. They want to show what they know because all their friends get to see what they did. And if there's a mistake it turns it into pure tutoring where another student can come up and show them what they've done wrong. And I make sure that the atmosphere stays extremely positive."

Teachers can also use the digital classroom to animate a lesson with graphics, statistics and sound. Students can answer questions from their desks with handheld "eggs" -- wireless voting devices with keypads. The IT specialist at Sells Middle School says that 18 classrooms will be fitted with digital system. Bob Vorac says it can be used with any subject - science, math, language and the arts. He says the system also holds promise for special needs children, who, he says, are typically visual learners.

"Did you notice, not only the kid up at the board but the other children in the classroom how they were watching what was going on? Sometimes in a special education classroom you have a hard time getting kids to focus in when it isn't their turn to be up on the stage," says Vorac.

School officials expect there may be opposition to digital instruction from a few teachers. But IT director Vorac says many others want their classrooms wired next.

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