

Jal Public Schools, Jal, NM

Improving morale, as well as grades, with MimioClassroom

Jal Public Schools is located in Lea County in rural southeastern New Mexico. The district currently enrolls approximately 400 students in grades K-12. Roughly 53 percent of the student population is eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. The need to raise test scores and meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks in the district was the driving force behind Jal Public Schools' decision to look at adding new interactive technology to its classrooms.

Raising test scores and meeting benchmarks through interactive technology

David Verschueren, IT Coordinator for the school system, knew instinctively that the best approach for gaining positive, long-lasting academic standing was to better engage both students and teachers. He knew that students would be engaged if all their learning experiences were impactful, and that teachers would be engaged if every teaching resource was of the highest caliber. He also knew that this had to be achieved without overwhelming the school system's budget.

In 2011, Verschueren went to the New Mexico Technology in Education conference, hoping to find technology-driven solutions that could maximize student engagement, improve instructional practices, and minimize achievement gaps. He found what he was looking for.

"After watching the demonstration of the Mimio solution," he says, "I was significantly impressed and knew the technology would catch on quickly in our schools. Its versatility, mobility, and its ability to deliver a truly interactive experience really resonated with us. I was also taken by how simple it was to use."

Shortly after the conference, Mimio worked with Jal Public Schools to arrange a pilot program. A second-grade teacher, a sixth-grade classroom, and a math class for seventh and eighth graders were set up with MimioTeach™ interactive whiteboards, at no cost. Each MimioTeach device came prepackaged with award-winning MimioStudio™ classroom software, which is compatible with Windows, Macintosh, and Linux operating systems.

Verschueren says he and the teachers were excited to participate in the pilot program. "We set about the task of adding differentiated instruction strategies, as well as some overdue vibrancy, to our curriculum," he says. But Verschueren understood that despite the versatility of the interactive whiteboards and software, the

“ For us, deciding to implement Mimio interactive teaching technologies was all about spending less and getting more. First, Mimio [technology] fits very well into our curriculum. Second, the teachers find it easy to use – consequently they use it. Third, our students are engaged!

– David Verschueren, IT coordinator, Jal Public Schools



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success of his program would lie in purchasing more than just one or two pieces of the MimioClassroom™ technology.

Embracing the full MimioClassroom suite

“We ordered all the interactive tools, plus we acquired new short-throw projectors,” he says. Jal’s additional purchases of the award-winning solution included MimioVote™ assessment, MimioView™ document camera, MimioPad™ wireless pen tablet, and MimioCapture™ ink recorder.



“This classroom renovation really set the tone for improved learning, not to mention it helped improve the morale of the teachers,” states Verschueren.

Teachers reported that their daily use of the interactive technologies made a significant and positive impact in their classrooms. “Other teachers started taking notice and requesting Mimio for their classrooms,” says Verschueren. So the school system ordered more full-classroom bundles from Mimio, as well as wall-mounted, short-throw projectors. Everything was installed in just a few days during the 2012 summer break.

Verschueren notes that he “liked how the Mimio full-classroom bundle actually replaced other classroom equipment, leaving less clutter in the rooms. I felt that when the students came back to school, we were going to be able to offer them a better way to learn. This solution provided teachers with a way to be original without complicating their day, was simple to use but not boring to the students, and –

from a purely selfish point of view – was completely reliable. Since we are in the business of education, it’s important that we can rely on our technology tools to work. If not, we stand to lose valuable instruction time that puts our students at a clear disadvantage in meeting and exceeding their academic goals.”

Teachers recognize the significance of integrating Mimio tools

For sixth-grade teacher Miki Savoie, the ease of use led to improved test scores. “It is super easy to work on MimioView, switch to the MimioVote, and then ‘write’ on the board with the MimioPad, all while in the same lesson,” she says. “I can actually add to the lesson by using the Internet, due to the fact that my whiteboard becomes my desktop with the MimioStudio software. I am able to create lessons in all subjects with the Mimio program, and, most importantly, there was an instant increase in reading scores after building lessons that were modeled in the same fashion as assessments.”

For Verschueren, the proof that they had the right tools in the hands of their teachers came as he observed the teachers in action and listened to them talk.

“The teachers began to recognize the significance of integrating Mimio into their existing lesson plans and standardized curriculum. They felt more effective, especially when teaching our growing population of English language learners. We all believed that it would give our students a better way to learn and the opportunity to enhance their academic success in language acquisition, as well as other core subjects.”

“The resource bank is amazing,” says second-grade teacher Chris Nash. “Many of the features support language skills development, including reading and writing. Add in the multimedia features, and you are giving students both a highly audio and visual approach to language acquisition. The MimioTeach is particularly helpful in stimulating these skills through whole-group interaction.”

Students vote yes on Mimio

While he knew the teachers loved the Mimio technology, Verschueren was curious about what the students thought. “After all, they are half of the



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equation when you think about teaching and learning driving academic gains,” he says.

So he conducted a survey of the district’s sixth-grade students to find out how they viewed Mimio technology. This class was chosen because they went part of the school year without MimioClassroom tools, and part of the year with them. “We hoped that these factors would help the students give an accurate and objective opinion.”

The survey results showed that as the year progressed, the sixth graders began to enjoy the classroom environment more and noticed improvement in their grades because the lessons were no longer “boring.” They also expressed pleasure at not having to take as many notes, and for being able to use the MimioVote assessment to take tests and quizzes – and see their results immediately. When asked if they thought Mimio tools enhanced their learning experience, 100 percent replied with a resounding YES.

“It is this kind of positive attitude that Jal Public Schools was seeking in its students and educators,” said Verschueren, noting that Mimio technology has brought about “more imaginative lessons from our teachers and more interest from our students. As more classrooms are equipped with Mimio products, we hope to see even more creativity blossom.”

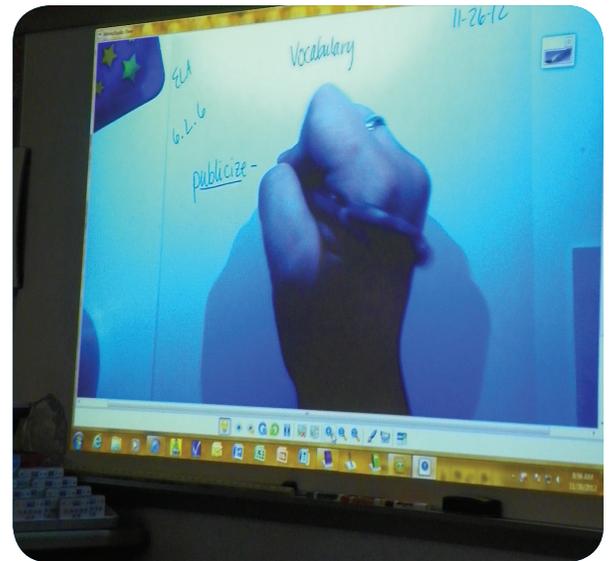
Verschueren and his colleagues are convinced that the MimioClassroom solution has allowed true curriculum integration. “The novelty of this teaching solution doesn’t wear off,” he says. “It gets better and more effective by the hour, as teachers collaborate with one another and learn new skills to get the most from the product. In short, our teachers love it.”

Making a difference now and in the future

“The MimioTeach is making a difference in our classrooms and is meeting our goals and objectives,” declares Verschueren. “I think it has made a difference in three distinct ways: it has improved student engagement levels, it gives our teachers

instant formative and summative assessment feedback, and it is exposing our teachers and students to the latest interactive technology that matches each and every learning style – auditory, kinesthetic, and visual.”

Verschueren points out that Jal’s successful implementation of Mimio technology is due in part to how easy it is to incorporate it in the classroom, and in part to the willingness of the teachers to try a new technology. “Of course,” he says, “we did conduct training in advance in order to ensure greater success. But now, when we walk the halls, we see a noticeable difference in the activity level and energy in



the classrooms. Teachers are standing up, facilitating information. Students are moving back and forth from the interactive whiteboard to their desks, or interacting from their desks using the wireless pad. We hear more of a dialogue between students and teachers.

“And it’s only going to get better,” he concludes, “as our teachers continue to participate in the professional development training and in the forums at mimioconnect.com, where countless ideas for lesson plans and tips on using the software resources and tools are readily shared and available.”



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