



Customer story

Lee County



Lee County scores big with its edtech upgrade by boldly embracing change

Change is never easy, especially when switching from the products and brands we know and trust to something unfamiliar. Whether it's going from Colgate to Crest, white bread to whole wheat, or Apple to Android, making even minor modifications to our daily lives can feel disruptive and disorienting.

So imagine being the CIO of one of the biggest school districts in the United States and having to ask thousands of educators to say goodbye to the classroom technology they'd been using for more than a decade and embrace an entirely new edtech solution.

That's the situation Dwayne Alton was in when Lee County School District in Fort Myers, Florida, decided to invest in new interactive panels for all of its 118 schools in 2018. After 10 years of using outdated whiteboards with projectors, the district wanted to upgrade with more modern equipment that would last far into the future.

Alton and his team narrowed the field to two providers: Promethean and SMART. Because Lee County teachers and staff had been using SMART technology for so long, choosing it seemed to be the path of least resistance. But when it came down to comparing apples to apples, "Promethean came out ahead by a good margin," said Alton.

Promethean steps up and delivers

According to Alton, the district had a clear list of requirements for its next panel provider: a strong and

reliable support structure, comprehensive training, quick follow-up when troubles arise, and no extra charges for software.

Promethean was the only company that checked all those boxes. It came through with excellent pricing, a solid support and professional development plan, and free ActivInspire software included with every ActivPanel. Alton also noted that the company's seven-year warranty gave him the confidence and peace of mind that the panels he was investing in were durable and built to last.

"Promethean really stepped up," said Alton. And that included analyzing the district's current edtech activities and demonstrating how it could do even more with Promethean's solution. "They did their research," explained Alton. "They were trying to make sure that the transition was as easy as possible for our teachers." That even included manually converting teachers' files that wouldn't convert automatically. "They were breaking down every barrier that we could have to transition."

It didn't take long for Alton to recognize that Promethean's offering was far superior to anything being proposed by the competition. But he knew that there was one more hurdle he needed to clear before he could make the final decision to move forward with a new edtech provider.

Getting teachers on board is critical

Karen Babor, the coordinator for instructional technology who's been with Lee County for more than 18 years, was involved in the process of deciding which interactive panel the district would go with. As "an avid SMART person" who'd been trained and certified in SMART technology, for her the choice was obvious.

But then she got a text from Alton one day. "You're gonna hate me, but I need to talk to you," she recalled reading. When she met with Alton, he told her: "We may need to go with Promethean. Everything they're offering is so much better. I want you to try it."

"I sat there and was like, 'I don't think so,'" Babor remembered with a laugh. "This is a SMART district. We've always done SMART." But at Alton's urging, she set up an appointment to try the ActivPanel with a Promethean rep and trainer. "I came in with an attitude," admitted Babor. "But after about 15 minutes with the panel, I was like 'Oh my gosh. This is awesome. It's so intuitive and easy to use.'" She was confident the transition for teachers wouldn't be a problem. "They'll pick it up and go."

According to Babor, the teachers saw the benefits of the Promethean panels right away. "The response from teachers has been amazing," she said. After getting an hour-long basic training from a Promethean consultant, they leave feeling energized and excited. "You can see it in their faces. They can't wait to go back and play with it," said Babor. And when teachers started using the panels in the classroom, they did so without a hitch. "I don't get a single help ticket," she marveled.

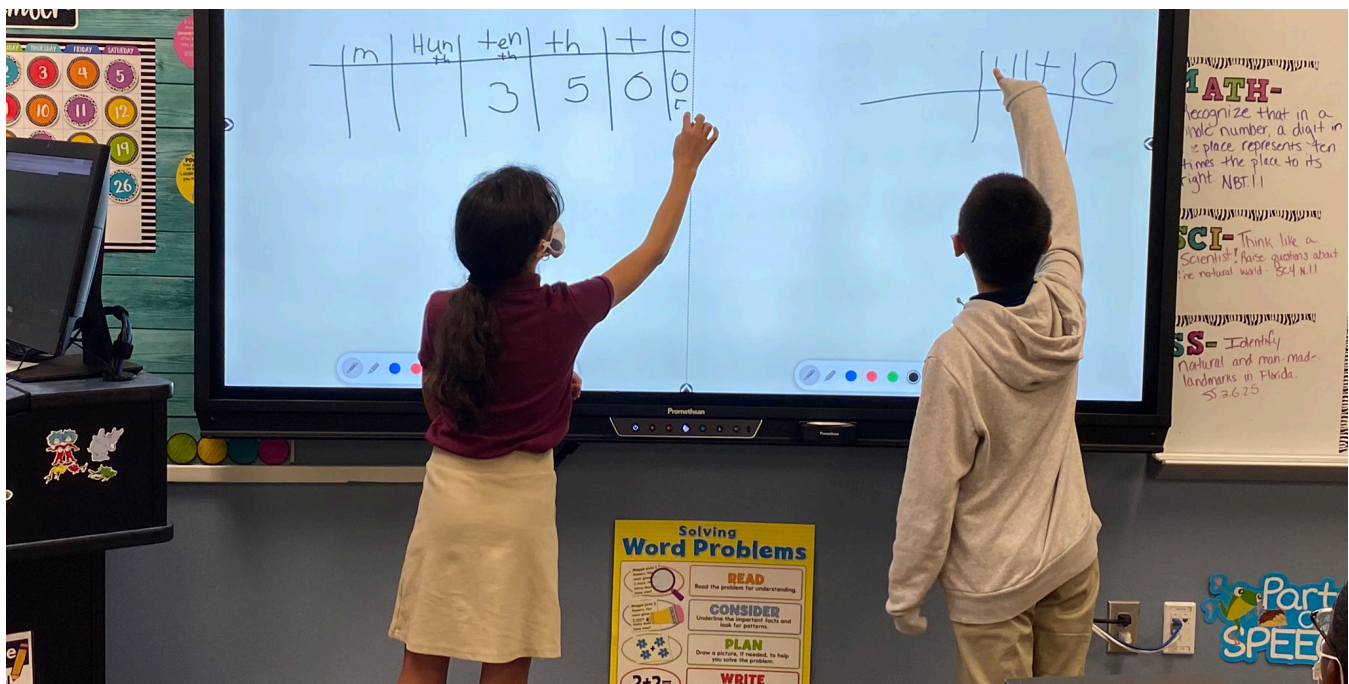
Promethean's dedicated consultants are unique in the industry

Both Babor and Alton said that Promethean's offer to embed a dedicated education consultant, Laura Pappas, in the district was a game-changer. "It was a major bonus for us because we have very few trainers in the district," explained Alton. "She takes a huge amount of work off of us."

"Promethean really stepped up. They did their research. They were breaking down every barrier that we could have to transition." Dwayne Alton

"Being able to have Laura as our constant support has just been incredible," added Babor. Because she's a Promethean employee, Pappas knows the ActivPanel and ActivInspire inside and out, which makes for superior trainings. Teachers can visit the special website Pappas created for the district to get answers to their questions or they can email Pappas directly. What's more, the district can set up customized training sessions whenever they're needed.

Katherine Benner, a fourth-grade teacher at Tropic Isles Elementary, was initially concerned about the switchover to Promethean. "Oh no, one more thing we have to learn," she recalled thinking. "But the transition was very smooth and really quick." Benner found Pappas's trainings to be high caliber, informative, and fun. And she particularly appreciated the regular follow



up. “For her to come back a couple of months later and say, ‘OK, what questions do you still have? How can I help you right now?’ It was just really nice.”

Teachers discover the joys of Promethean

While Alton was initially concerned about the transition from SMART Notebook to Promethean’s flipcharts, Lee County teachers ended up embracing the new platform with gusto. “I really enjoy making flipcharts with ActivInspire because I can be creative,” said Colleen Ference, a second-grade teacher at Gulf Elementary. “I’m having a lot of fun with it and doing all kinds of things that I might not normally have done right away.”

Benner uses flipcharts to create games for her students, and she encourages them to get involved in the creative process. “Now I have kids make their own flipcharts,” she explained. “They actually earn points to be able to borrow my computer and build their own flipcharts to review materials or build a game for their classmates.”

Teachers also find that bringing students up to the panel to solve problems is a great way to get kids to see things on a larger scale, learn from each other’s thought processes, and discover solutions together. “When they’re sitting at their desks, they don’t get that opportunity,” explained Benner. “Having them up at the board, they’re seeing it and then the whole class is seeing it. It has led to so many great discussions. They’ve gotten so much more involved in each other’s way of thinking than they would have otherwise.”



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