smartlab

CASE STUDY: DANBURY LOCAL SCHOOLS

ENGAGING EVERY STUDENT— REGARDLESS OF ABILITY

In 2014, Danbury Local School District was looking for a way to challenge gifted learners beyond simply assigning more complex worksheets or projects. Standardized test scores had plateaued for the gifted students, service times in the gifted pullout classroom were limited, and students craved more hands-on experiences.

In addition to challenging gifted students further, school administrators wanted to find a program that would engage every student while ensuring that they were at the forefront of 21st-century learning.

After much research, the team landed on a SmartLab HQ, which provided the strongest overall program for every student in their schools—especially the gifted ones. To learn more about how the lab has impacted the school and students, we spoke with Marlana Mielke, the SmartLab Facilitator and Gifted Intervention Specialist.

SmartLab: How has the SmartLab HQ helped you serve gifted students?

MIELKE: Our gifted students use the SmartLab HQ with their homeroom class as well as during their pullout gifted class. Their critical- and creative-thinking skills are challenged daily. The result? We've seen an increase in standardized testing scores and, overall, student behavior has improved.

SmartLab: How has the SmartLab HQ helped you serve every student?

MIELKE: All students in grades 3–6 use the SmartLab HQ. While there, students are actively engaged and working in an environment that supports their needs, whether that be hands-on

WE'VE SEEN AN INCREASE IN STANDARDIZED TESTING SCORES

projects, increased exposure to technology, or collaboration and interaction with peers.

SmartLab: What is the biggest aha you've experienced since installing the SmartLab HQ?

MIELKE: Perhaps the greatest unintended consequence of the SmartLab HQ is the engagement among the general population of students, in particular, students who struggle with behavioral issues in class.

It's extremely rare that students act out or behave unacceptably in the lab. While they may grow frustrated when things don't initially work out their way, they're usually eager to make adjustments to their projects and try again in an effort to succeed. I feel that my students know the value of the lab and do their best each day.

SmartLab: How has SmartLab Learning helped students grow?

MIELKE: One student who has behavioral issues in other classes, truly thrives in the SmartLab HQ. He's a kinesthetic learner who needs to be able to touch and manipulate objects in order to learn, which is why he struggles in the traditional classroom setting. In the SmartLab HQ, he doesn't have any behavioral issues—in fact, he's always willing to collaborate with classmates in a respectful manner.

SmartLab: How has SmartLab Learning impacted your school?

"They're learning perseverance through trial and error."

MIELKE: Since implementing the SmartLab HQ, we've expanded STEM classes to K–2. I go to those classes and facilitate projects, which is helping prepare those students to enter the lab when they're in third grade. Additionally, students are developing a greater ability to collaborate with peers and are gaining a deeper understanding of how that will impact their future lives.

Finally, they're learning perseverance through trial and error as they work on their lab assignments.

Danbury Elementary and Middle Schools, located in Danbury, OH, launched their SmartLab HQ during the 2014–15 school year.

3–6
Grades served

200
Students