



# Future Ready Children

in Northwest ISD

using TeachSmart® Interactive Displays

## An Age-Appropriate Solution for the Pre-K Classroom

### Northwest ISD

Northwest Independent School District is one of the largest school districts in Texas that spans over three different counties and serves over 21,000 students. **Northwest ISD strives to be a school district where every student is future ready: ready for college, ready for the global workplace and ready for personal success.** Northwest ISD's youngest learners are a big part of this mission, so the district invested in Hatch® technology to get their preschoolers kindergarten-ready.

The district was awarded a Texas House Bill 4 grant, which was intended to increase the quality of preschool classrooms with age-appropriate technology. With many grant guidelines to consider, the district did plenty of research before it decided to invest in Hatch technology. Ultimately, Northwest ISD purchased nine Hatch TeachSmart® Displays, state-of-the-art interactive displays complete with thousands of classroom-ready activities.

### Why Hatch?

Deanne Colley, an early childhood coordinator for Northwest ISD, said the most important thing the district wanted in a piece of technology was age appropriateness: Colley and other educators wanted technology that was designed for preschoolers, and were tired of adapting technology for the children in their classrooms that was originally designed for kindergarteners. This made Hatch a fantastic choice, as all Hatch technology comes with research-based activities specifically designed to get preschool children ready for kindergarten.

The district also needed something that was easily portable, yet still sturdy enough to withstand daily wear and tear in a preschool classroom. For this reason, Northwest ISD chose the Hatch TeachSmart interactive display, which is free standing and does not require a projector or need to be mounted to the wall. Colley said this feature makes the technology more versatile, avoids the hassle of moving the device and reduces the chance of damaging walls when a teacher wants to relocate it for a different activity.

Colley's favorite feature about the TeachSmart display is that all activities come built in and ready to use.

*"That's why Hatch TeachSmart is so great. From the first day it's set up, my teachers can jump in and work on it with the children." - Deanne Colley*

The built-in characteristic also means that TeachSmart does not require annual subscriptions: This was an important consideration for Northwest ISD because the technology was purchased with state grant money. "Three or four years down the road, we may not have the funds to upgrade or renew our subscription," she said. "I'm comforted to know that our technology isn't going anywhere, even if our grant money does."



## Why TeachSmart Works Well

Each child learns differently, and at the malleable preschool age, Colley said it's important that children learn in as many different ways as possible. "Some children work best with manipulatives, some with pencil and paper, and some with technology. Every time you add another way of learning, different parts of your brain are activated and connected," she said.

Colley said by showing children the same lesson in different ways, they're able to find a way that clicks and gain a deeper understanding of the lesson. Because there are so many ways for children to internalize lessons, Colley thinks it's imperative that technology is not used as the "main event" in a classroom, but instead as another tool that helps mesh many types of learning together. Teachers in Northwest ISD have been able to successfully accomplish this with TeachSmart because of the product's versatility. Teachers are able to integrate planning they have already done, access the internet and calendar, and adjust the difficulty of preloaded activities.



*"The scaffolding is a huge help so you aren't tied to one thing. The teachers have the ability to really make it their own, which makes them excited about using it." - Deanne Colley*

Colley said that seeing an increase in the children's comfort with the technology has been very rewarding.

"By putting the technology in the classroom, students begin to learn the language surrounding technology," she said. "This helps them when they leave the classroom, and connects home and school with the real world."

At a parent fun night, one Northwest ISD teacher set up the TeachSmart display to show parents the new technology. Students were thrilled to show the display to their parents, and didn't hesitate before teaching their parents how to use it and play a sorting game. Even though some children are already more comfortable with touch screens and technology than their parents, Colley said it was great to see the children confidently dive deeper into the different activities on the TeachSmart display.

## The Future of the Partnership

Unfortunately, the state of Texas chose not to fund the House Bill 4 preschool grants for another year. This lack of funding limits Northwest ISD's ability to purchase more Hatch technology for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, Colley said she wants to build on the technology that the district already owns and is excited to use more of the TeachSmart digital portfolios this year. The TeachSmart digital portfolios record one-on-one play between teacher and student, and can be shown to parents or used as another assessment tool.

In the future, Colley said she would love to work with Hatch again if the district receives funding; she has been so pleased with the extended warranties and Hatch's customer service. When the district had a problem with one device, Hatch came out and did a whole district check to make sure everything else was in order. "I can't say enough about the customer support. When we had any issues, the company worked so well with our district," she said.

Learn more about [TeachSmart interactive displays](#).

