



The Key to Dual Language Instruction in Brownsville ISD using iStartSmart® Computers

Research-Based Games Teach Core Skills to Spanish Speakers

Brownsville ISD

Located in the southern tip of Texas, Brownsville ISD is the largest school district in the Rio Grande Valley and serves nearly 50,000 students. The majority of the students in Brownsville speak Spanish and come from households where English is not the first language. Brownsville ISD is a proud owner of Hatch® technology, and uses Hatch iStartSmart® all-in-one computers in every preschool classroom in the district.

With so many preschool classrooms to equip, the decision to purchase Hatch computers for every classroom was far from simple. Marion Velarde, an early childhood specialist for Brownsville, said the purchasing process for Brownsville began with a list of recommended vendors from the education commissioner.

After reviewing the commissioner's list, administrators in Brownsville were drawn to Hatch for a variety of reasons. Velarde said that the Hatch technology was greatly considered because it was designed utilizing researched-based software. This software would provide essential literary and math skills the children needed to develop by the time they reach kindergarten. She added that the teachers also appreciated the detailed installation and training that Hatch provided to make the implementation process as seamless as possible.

The technology was installed on time and included professional development training for all teachers in the district that would be using the technology. These services ensured that every teacher had their Hatch computers up and running and were comfortable using the software.

Velarde was especially impressed with Hatch's Classroom Integration Consultant, Emilio Solis, who traveled to Brownsville and successfully installed all of the computers in each class without disrupting any school's schedule. Solis trained each teacher in how to effectively use the Hatch computers. Velarde said this training session helped teachers get excited and familiar with all aspects of the Hatch all-in-one computer.

"We live in a world that is immersed with technology. Children are ready and willing to play on the computers." – Marion Velarde

Technology in Action

Nora Arita teaches preschool at Castañeda Elementary in Brownsville ISD. Arita has been using Hatch all-in-one computers for three years and is currently incorporating five Hatch computers into daily lesson plans for the 18 children in her class.

At the beginning of the school year, Arita introduces the Hatch technology to her children in groups of different sizes. First, she demonstrates the Hatch computers to the whole class, and allows students to come up one at a time to answer



questions. After the children were familiar with the basic guidelines and functionality, Arita breaks students into smaller groups and/or pairs and allows them to peer-tutor each other before they venture onto their individualized instruction. Arita says this method is very effective since over 90 percent of the children in her classroom speak Spanish. By first introducing the Hatch technology to the group as a whole, Arita was able to answer initial questions and clear up any uncertainties about common English phrases and directions.

Once the children are ready for individual play, Arita sets them up with the English games and stays close by to clear up any confusion. While she usually starts the activities in English, Arita said she loves Hatch's dual-language feature, which gives her the option to switch the game to Spanish if a child is really struggling.



Arita also found that the Hatch computer works really well as a re-focusing tool for children who tend to be easily distracted. She said a common cause of this difficulty with staying focused is that most children have access to technology at home, and are used to using devices that require pressing buttons or touching screens and have fun images and sounds. This association can make it hard for some children to focus during regular class activities. Since children learn in a variety of ways, the Hatch all-in-one computers have been a great tool to help them turn their focus to learning.

Arita found this to be true in one particular case with a child who did not seem to be grasping anything via other class activities. The child was never focused, highly active and unable to correctly answer questions. However, when they were allowed to play on the Hatch computer, it was evident to Arita that the child indeed did know the concepts; they just needed the computer as a tool to demonstrate their skills. The all-in-one computers have served as a great outlet, and enable children to show teachers what they really know in a more focused environment.

Arita was able to monitor this individual progress through the Hatch reporting systems, a feature she was most excited about trying out when the technology was first implemented.

"The charts are very easy to understand, and I love that I can compare the progress of each student throughout the school year!" - Nora Arita

The Hatch reporting systems give her a clearer picture of how students are improving and allow her to plan activities to help with the skills children are struggling with.

Along with seeing the children's success in literary and math skills, the most rewarding thing for Arita is to see these children helping others on the devices and improving their social-emotional skills. "From not being able to answer in a group setting, to actually showing others how to complete the tasks, has been very rewarding to watch."

Learn more about [iStartSmart Elite Computers](#).

