Local school using SMART devices to help youngsters

Teacher Kristen Benevento works with Gianna Theodoropoulos and Aidan Kathleen.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

BY SCOTT FISHMAN
Staff Writer

The University School Lower School’s pre-K program aims to challenge students with a wide range of resources.

Officials at the Davie school say they have found success with the interactive SMART Board and SMART Table.

“The typical prekindergarten student comes into our program already equipped with the basic skills needed to operate a computer,” said Nadine Barnes, Lower School director. “They easily adjust to the variety of software presented to them to support their learning.”

The boards are utilized in various subjects, as well as to help strengthen fine motor skills. Each student also has access to a SMART Table, a multi-touch, multi-user learning center that allows groups of students to work simultaneously on its surface. Faculty members say youngsters enjoy demonstrating on the SMART Table knowledge gained in the classroom.

The table also comes with a collection of applications that provide teachers with ready-made activities. Among them is a multiple choice program where children answer questions by dragging the answer to a certain image. Students also can use the table to paint by selecting colors and effects with the option to paint with their fingers. Children work together on math problems, tangrams and jigsaw puzzles.

Teachers like Kristen Benevento are equipped with a USB bracelet to transfer activities between the table and their computers. They can download customizable SMART Table activity packs that correspond with created lesson activities.

“We use the SMART Boards daily to enhance student learning,” Benevento said. “We can be studying the human skeleton in science or Van Gogh in art and can easily find relevant games and resources using the SMART Exchange website. Our students are so engaged in the SMART Board programs that they don’t even realize that they are cooperating with one another and expanding their knowledge.”

Team leader Kathy Barberio agreed.

The devices provide “experiences that have learners interacting with knowledge in ways that are concrete and physical,” she said. “The SMART Table accommodates different learning styles and encourages collaboration, cooperation and self-discovery. This begins a journey of discovery and promotes a love of learning in our students.”

Scott Fishman can be reached at smfishman@tribune.com.