

As Ed McCauley said, “When you are not practicing, remember, someone somewhere is practicing, and when you meet him he will win.” Practice makes perfect, or at least that’s what we tell our students all the time. The only way to get better at something is to practice it repeatedly, correcting our mistakes every time we do it. Practice certainly does help, especially in skilled based subjects such as math and music and the involvement of a Smartboard certainly helps students with practicing a concept or a skill. A Smartboard can help scaffold examples and problems easily, you can integrate many of the multimedia principles, and can allow for immediate, explanatory feedback to the students. There are some drawbacks to using a Smartboard for practice as only one person at a time can use a Smartboard and it can be frustrating to learn how to use one of the boards.

One of the problems that I run into as a teacher is transitioning to practice problems as explaining a topic or showing an example. Students don’t always grasp every step or property after seeing and hearing it from a teacher and then having to do it themselves. This is an area where I use the Smartboard to help scaffold examples until the students build up all the necessary skills to complete a problem on their own. By using a Smartboard, I can make different examples ahead of time that are not completely finished and it’s the student’s job to finish the problem. I can also write all of the steps out and then mix them up so the student has to put them in the correct order as well as other ways to ease a student into a problem instead of tossing them right into the fire. As is mentioned up in “IWB: Boon or Bandwagon?,” teachers can make the lessons ahead of time and re-use the lessons either from year to year or even teacher to teacher so if you can effectively scaffold a lesson, you can save it for other classes or allow other teachers to do the same.

Since you are using an interactive tool, the computer along with the Smartboard, you can incorporate many of the multimedia principles that are important for learning. You can use the modality and redundancy principle meaning that you can use the appropriate modality, and only one so students aren't being blitzed with information, for practice. You can use audio to give directions but in most cases it is better to use text so that students can refer back to it while that develop a plan or a solution. This also works well with feedback as that can refer to exactly what they did incorrectly. The redundancy principle tells us to stick to one modality so if you use text, stick to text and don't narrate it as well. You can also use the contiguity principle to combine some learning styles. This principle supports aligning graphic and texts to better explain concepts or ideas. On a traditional whiteboard, this can be a hard principle to use as graphics aren't necessarily at the instructors disposal. One principle to keep in mind is the coherence principle as it might be easy and fun to put flashy graphics and text in the lesson but they are not necessary and will distract the learner from the heart of the subject.

A great feature of Smartboards is the ability to give immediate and explanatory feedback to students as well as multiple ways to incorporate it. One way is to have the student do their work on the board and since the teacher is watching, they can tell the student exactly what they did correctly or incorrectly. This is also helpful for the rest of the class as they may have made the same mistakes or are now aware of what not to do. You can also incorporate the feedback into the program depending on the type of activity the learner is doing. You can add a button with audio when they click on a button or maybe a prompt with text instead of audio so the students can refer to the specific points of the problem that needs improvement. Constructive feedback is such an important tool to any learner because how can we improve if we don't know what needs improvement and if we don't know how to properly improve on it?

While a Smartboard can be very effective in helping students with practice, there are also drawbacks to the use of one. A big disadvantage is that only one person can be using the board at once. Because of this, not all students may get the practice that they need for success in a subject. To combat this problem, I have a set of individual white boards that I have all the students use and then I send one student up to the board at a time. This way, everybody is able to work on the problems and at their own pace. Yet another downside is time. Since only one student can be up there at a time and I have to transition them between their seats and the board, it does take up some time but I try to set the order of students ahead of time so they know exactly whose going up and when they are going up. A third negative aspect of practicing with the Smartboard is learning how to use it. It takes students a while to adjust to using one, especially if they've never been in a classroom with one before, and there are a lot of features they need sufficient knowledge of. People can easily overreact when and if something goes wrong with the board and it could discourage them from using it again.

In conclusion, Smartboards are very effective tools when it comes to helping students practice in skill based lessons or subjects. Instructors can easily scaffold lessons so students can pick up individual pieces of the process before they put it all together to complete a problem and the teacher can use that strategy in other classes. Since the Smartboard is a multimedia tool, the various multimedia principles can be applied and even enhanced with the proper knowledge of the Smartboard. Instant and constructive feedback can be given to learners in a variety of ways allowing them to correct their work as needed. The Smartboard however isn't the end all, because as there are some disadvantages such as the ability for only one person to use the board, the transition time, and operating the Smartboard itself. In the end, Smartboards add much

excitement as well fundamental principles to allow students to use practice to advance their knowledge of a subject.