



## Ron Clark Academy Helps Lead the World's EdTech Revolution

[Ron Clark Academy](#) (RCA) in Southeast Atlanta is possibly the most famous middle school in America. Some people know RCA because of its high-profile donors—from Coca-Cola to Delta to Oprah Winfrey. Some have heard of the school's renowned, award-winning cofounders, Ron Clark and Kim Bearden, both of whom are bestselling authors who have made numerous appearances on national television. Clark is also the subject of the movie, *The Ron Clark Story*, starring Matthew Perry. And some know RCA from the [viral music video](#) its students recorded with rapper Ludacris for Super Bowl LIII or the ["Vote However You Like"](#) song they

wrote for the 2008 presidential election.

But behind all the media attention is a truly extraordinary school that has been hailed as groundbreaking by educators all over the world. RCA is committed to creating "a loving, dynamic learning environment that promotes academic excellence and fosters leadership." It believes that any child can succeed given the right support and direction, and the school proves it by carefully choosing a diverse student body composed of students who cover the gamut—from gifted to average to underachieving.



According to Junior Bernadin, dean of students and director of technology at RCA, technology plays a central role in the school's unique mission:

*"One of the things that we find important as part of the educational revolution that we're putting together is that we must continue to expose our students to various types of technologies, while also experimenting and finding out what truly works in the classroom."*

As a proud sponsor of RCA since its founding in 2007, Promethean is a key player in that educational revolution.

## Promethean technology is a critical element of the innovative classroom

RCA has been remarkably successful at raising its students' test scores and grades, helping them get into elite high schools and colleges, and preparing them for challenging and rewarding careers, but its mission extends far beyond the school's Atlanta-based campus. Over the past 13 years, RCA has

welcomed more than 80,000 superintendents, administrators, and teachers to the [RCA Experience](#), which offers hands-on workshops that explore ways to maximize student engagement, improve academic achievement, and build teacher-student relationships. Bernadin notes that technology—specifically Promethean technology—has been central to developing and sharing those best practices.

"When I think of Promethean and what that technology has done for us over these 13 years, I think it's helped us enhance our ability to innovate education, to demonstrate that to educators from all across the world, and to do it while having our students enjoy the art of learning," explained Bernadin.

Bernadin describes RCA as a training lab, where technology allows both educators and students to experiment and take chances. "It's a super important part of the educational experience. A lot of times in education, we're not celebrating the opportunities that are associated with taking risks and making mistakes."

## Learning math can—and should!—be fun

In the hands of RCA's talented, award-winning faculty, [Promethean's interactive displays](#) and [lesson delivery software](#) are always used to their fullest potential. Dr. Camille Jones, math teacher and department head, has relied on Promethean for a decade to help her students grasp difficult concepts. "I want the students to be so comfortable

with using technology that it isn't like a separate entity, it's part of the classroom experience," she explained. "Not only to be more understanding of how to use technology, but to spark their curiosity."



Jones is constantly exploring new uses for the panel and new technology-based math programs to integrate into her lessons. For example, she recently discovered DimensionU, which developed multiplayer video games to help students learn math. "It's an actual role-play video game, in a world where you destroy monsters with mathematics. And we found a way to put it on both the students' computers and the ActivPanel," noted Jones. "Instead of having students just do normal problems for homework, they can play video games, which makes it a little more fun and interactive."

Jones did her [dissertation](#) at Columbia University on how computer gaming can help students become more motivated and fluent in math, so she has been particularly interested in exploring these cutting-edge programs. Her study of 70 third graders showed that using a modern instructional game called Timez Attack resulted in a significant increase in student computational achievement in

multiplication, division, and algebra, as well as an increase in student motivation for learning math.

## Digital art promotes understanding and confidence

Art and mathematics teacher Carrie-Jo Wallace was familiar with interactive panels before coming to RCA five years ago, but her old school used SMART technology. "I always thought they were similar, but they are really so different," she said. "So I was like, 'Wow, OK, there are a lot of things I can do with Promethean that I couldn't do before.' Now I'm hooked."



For Wallace, having an ActivPanel has helped her pursue her passion for integrating art into all types of subject matter. "Digital art has become a definite component in my classroom—even in my math instruction—because kids love art," she explained. "I'm a huge art integration advocate, and the panel really helped change the game in my art classroom."

But even though her students enjoy art, they still struggle with their confidence. "One of the hardest things in art is that kids want you to do it for them,"

she explained. Wallace began taking screenshots of students' work and putting them up on her ActivPanel. She then uses the drawing tool to make suggestions. "I can demonstrate it on the board, so they can visually see it, but I haven't touched their work at all." She also likes to ask the students to come up to the panel and make their own adjustments, so they can experiment without hesitation and actually see what they can accomplish. "It's a big confidence booster."

## The simplest tools can be the most effective



Science teacher Daniel Thompson is another enthusiastic proponent of the ActivPanel and an eager explorer of all its capabilities. "I'm the nerd at the school who figures out all the stuff I can do, and then I go show everybody else." Thompson said he was "super psyched" when he recently got the latest version of the panel. "Essentially, all the tools are embedded inside of it, which is amazing." He says that his goal is to never have to walk over to his computer to pull something up on the panel. "I always want to be facing my students. I don't ever want to turn my back to them. I want to keep my energy right there with my kids."

Like Jones, Thompson is constantly looking for new ways to utilize the ActivPanel's many features, but two of his favorites are the simplest: the spinner and the timer. When he needs to call on a student to answer a tough question, he uses the spinner to choose someone randomly, so no one feels like they're being targeted. And he uses the timer to set limits for his students and help them understand the concept of time. "I've found that young students have a misconception of time," Thompson explained. "When you give them a time limit of 10 minutes, they don't understand that if they get up to sharpen their pencil and they sit back down, now they only have eight minutes."

At RCA, teachers understand that all students learn differently, so they might need different types of instruction and support in order to succeed. Thompson sees the ActivPanel as a way to reach all those types of learners.

*"The overall capability of the panel allows us to not only hit our auditory thinkers, but also our visual thinkers, and our kinesthetic thinkers."*

He only wishes that all teachers and students could have these critical tools in their arsenal. "I didn't have a panel for my first couple of years teaching," Thompson said. "I was so excited to come to RCA because I knew they had that technology. I think everybody should have access to it."



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