

## Qualities of Successful Facilitators

Learning is different in a SmartLab. Students take responsibility for their own learning. For this reason, teaching professionals in a SmartLab are called "Facilitators". The title reflects their role – to facilitate learning. Most Facilitators take great pride in this role and the title. No two Facilitators are alike but most successful facilitators exhibit a number of common characteristics. Successful facilitators empower students, model lifelong learning, and demonstrate strong time and project management skills.

As a Facilitator you will no longer teach a specific discipline. Rather, you will manage, mentor, and guide student learning and success. A Facilitator encourages, inspires, and empowers learners. The responsibility to learn, work, set and meet objectives falls to the student. If that frightens you, relax! We've been doing this for over 25 years and it works! As one award winning Facilitator suggested – **trust the process**. You will be amazed at what your students accomplish with the SmartLab resources, your support, and their intrinsic interests.

### Personal and Professional Characteristics

Successful SmartLab Facilitators exhibit high energy levels, excitement, creativity, and a genuine interest in the progress of their students. Given the high level of student autonomy in the SmartLab, Facilitators must cede responsibility for learning to their students in order to coach and challenge them at their individual levels. In addition, the Facilitator must manage a large set of classroom resources found in the SmartLab. Therefore excellent organizational skills are a plus.

Facilitators must understand how to manage a classroom where learning is highly-individualized, many different activities take place simultaneously, and the daily experience constantly changes. Most learners find SmartLabs intrinsically interesting and stay on task. However, a successful SmartLab Facilitator remains keenly aware classroom behavior and shows a firm hand when necessary to ensure productive learning.

Facilitators model their love of learning. The ability to say, "I don't know but, I'm willing to learn." helps students to understand that motivation comes from within. Additionally, many students feel empowered when asked to demonstrate an expertise developed in the SmartLab to their peers or adults. Successful Facilitators often remark, "I learn as much as the kids" or "I learn something new every day in the SmartLab!"

Facilitators often energetically advocate for the SmartLab. Ideally, the Facilitator actively collaborates with colleagues to connect SmartLab projects and resources to learning in traditional disciplines. Done effectively, the SmartLab acts as a resource for the school rather than a stand-alone room.

### Teaching Background

Successful SmartLab Facilitators come from a wide range of teaching and professional backgrounds. Prior experience in science, math, English, or social studies helps foster connections between SmartLab learning engagements and core academics. Experience with project-based learning is a plus. Many SmartLab Facilitators successfully coach sport teams or lead after-school programs.

SmartLabs are flexible learning environments that take advantage of the strengths of each teaching professional and the needs of the local community. The extensive professional development and support provided by Creative Learning Systems prepares educators to facilitate the SmartLab.

### **Technological Experience and Knowledge**

Creative Learning Systems provides extensive technical support for its SmartLab partners. While the SmartLab is typically the most technology-rich classroom in the school, it is not essential that the Facilitator have a strong technological background. That said, successful SmartLab Facilitators demonstrate comfort with computer operation and the ability to locate and understand technical information. They should be technologically savvy enough to confidently say to a learner, "I don't know, but I bet we can figure it out!"

### **Expectations and Accountability**

Set high expectations for your students. Hold students accountable for their work from concept to completion. Learners are allowed – indeed encouraged – to fail in a SmartLab. We know that some of the best learning takes place when students encounter and learn to overcome unanticipated challenges and problems. Students need to document and communicate their failures as well as their successes.

### **Inspiring and Engaging Students**

So, what do you do when a learner is not motivated or interested?

How do you respond when a learner has difficulty transitioning from a traditional classroom model to the SmartLab?

We realize that you may have different levels of interest and motivation. We provide many resources to help you make the transition from schooling to learning. First, our curriculum is designed to be flexible and to allow you to tailor it to your own needs. Second, our ongoing support team is available to help you with any questions or challenges you may have. Third, our curriculum is designed to be engaging and to provide a variety of learning experiences. Finally, our curriculum is designed to be challenging and to provide a variety of learning experiences.

Our curriculum is designed to be flexible and to allow you to tailor it to your own needs. Second, our ongoing support team is available to help you with any questions or challenges you may have. Third, our curriculum is designed to be engaging and to provide a variety of learning experiences. Finally, our curriculum is designed to be challenging and to provide a variety of learning experiences.

Our curriculum is designed to be flexible and to allow you to tailor it to your own needs. Second, our ongoing support team is available to help you with any questions or challenges you may have. Third, our curriculum is designed to be engaging and to provide a variety of learning experiences. Finally, our curriculum is designed to be challenging and to provide a variety of learning experiences.