

SUCCESS STORIES



Breezin' Thru™ Theory inspires a love for music with SMART Notebook lessons

Jean McKen and Nancy Helstab, the founders of Breezin' Thru Theory, are champions of music education. With their [Breezin' Thru Theory software](#), they have taken the study of music theory to an entirely new level of engagement for students in grades 5–12.

As a former classroom music teacher and composer, McKen saw a gap in the available resources for educators. When she developed Breezin' Thru Theory, she was on a mission to fill that gap. "I saw a need for a comprehensive and engaging curriculum resource that included the study of music theory and its application to composition," explains McKen.

Using a five-step model, Breezin' Thru Theory features fun See It – Hear It lesson pages, two-minute drills, games, composition activities and summative assessments. The software's Online Binder gives teachers and students access to 26 chapters featuring 15 composition activities and more than 200 drills.

This school year, Breezin' Thru Theory launched a [Teacher's Companion](#) component for [SMART Notebook collaborative learning software](#) that is uniquely integrated with the [SMART Board interactive whiteboard](#) and the [SMART Response interactive response system](#). The software has received Elite accreditation from [SMART's Software and Content Accreditation Program](#).

The Teacher's Companion is a highly interactive add-on to Breezin' Thru Theory that helps teachers engage students the way they learn best, through auditory, visual and kinesthetic lessons. Hands-on lessons enable students to complete activities, quizzes and games on the SMART Board interactive whiteboard.

The add-on originated because Helstab and McKen saw opportunities to enhance their product. "Our online binder and games were already Internet-based, and worked brilliantly on the interactive whiteboard, but we wanted to take the interactivity further using the powerful features of SMART Notebook software," explains Helstab.

To develop the Teacher's Companion, Helstab and McKen looked for a local developer who had experience with SMART products. They visited the [contractor directory](#) on the SEN portal and found [CFA Communications](#), a local media design and production company with accredited developers who specialize in creating content for SMART Notebook.

"The whole development process was extremely smooth. We met with our developer weekly, which gave Jean an opportunity to share her music expertise in instructional design," says Helstab.

As part of the Teacher Companion project, Breezin' Thru Theory developed easy-to-use, dynamic content that is tied to curriculum standards. The SMART Notebook lessons are integrated with SMART Response assessment software, so in classrooms with SMART Response systems, students can respond to ear-training activities with their handheld remotes.

"Music teachers are so busy, and if you don't provide them with ready-to-go, quality resources, your content will die a quick death! We wanted to create content that was brilliant from the start," says Helstab.

At recent music educator conferences, the response to Breezin' Thru Theory software has been overwhelmingly positive. "We have SMART Board interactive whiteboards at the conferences and our booth becomes a hub of activity," says Helstab. "We almost get bumped out of our own booth because it becomes so crowded!"

Educators can preview lesson resources on the [SMART Exchange website](#), and Helstab and McKen plan to list their content on the SMART Exchange e-commerce store when it launches later this year.

"We champion music education, and SMART products help us do that by bringing engagement into the classroom. We know that music classes become optional as students grow older – the engaging, dynamic lessons that we can offer with SMART products instill a love for music that students can carry with them for life," says McKen.

