

Chapter 19

Are you SMARTer than a SMART Board™?

How to Effectively Use this Technology Tool to Communicate in a Classroom with a Diverse Group of Learners

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ABSTRACT

Interactive whiteboards (IWBs) became obtainable in the early 1990's. An IWB is an electronic, interactive board which is either mounted or mobile. While interactive whiteboards are just one of many different engaging technology tools available today, it is the most commonly seen in the classroom. IWBs offer opportunities for teachers to become facilitators of knowledge while students demonstrate their learning through physically moving components on the interactive whiteboard. Students from all different learning styles and backgrounds have come together and shown their enthusiasm through these one-touch systems which become the center of their classroom. This chapter will focus on the various ways interactive whiteboards, specifically SMART Board™, can be used in the classroom and also challenges associated with this type of technology usage. Interactive whiteboards provide environments where all types of learners have a common interest, interacting with technology which is both educational and fun.

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INTRODUCTION

There are educators who, unfortunately, due to lack of professional development and training, merely use interactive whiteboards as a presentation tool. This occurs when teachers are expected to use this technology tool without any instructional support. Districts often have instructional technology or information/instructional technology (IT) staff, information technology staff to support the management of technology. These individuals typically are not trained in how to use the technology for teaching and learning. Instructional technology coaches can be referred to as those who train and instruct teachers in how to use the technology placed in their classrooms effectively to meet the needs of all their learners. Due to economic changes and budget cuts, instructional technology coaches may not be available.

Interactive whiteboards are costly tools which must be used properly to engage learners in the classroom. This chapter will showcase how to use interactive whiteboards, specifically SMART Board™ to create an engaging, effective learning environment. One of the issues associated with interactive whiteboards is the misunderstanding of their purpose. Interactive whiteboards were created for *students*, not the teachers. Unfortunately, some teachers use them solely for a presentation tool. They are meant to be used to interact and engage students in the classroom.

The average interactive whiteboard is 6-7 feet wide and about 4 feet tall. They are mounted or mobile interactive whiteboards. The mounted interactive whiteboards are commonly mounted on an existing whiteboard securely to a wall. Some versions come with an attached liquid crystal display (LCD) projector. Others use a ceiling mounted projector, which is installed to precisely project the image directly onto the interactive whiteboards. The mobile interactive whiteboards are attached to a rolling base which can be moved around the room. This interactive whiteboard also needs a LCD projector. Both types of interactive

whiteboards require a computer system to run the software. Specific drivers must also be downloaded to the computer to complete the installation of the interactive whiteboard system. Users can decide if they wish to use their finger or an electronic tool to use the interactive whiteboard.

The interactive whiteboard can last for many years if taken care of properly. The software updates become the key player in staying current with the resources available with the interactive whiteboards. Depending on the model, the interactive whiteboard will include an electronic pen or electronic marker to be used to write on the interactive whiteboard. Often times, users will simply use their finger as the tool to write. The interactive whiteboard allows the user to choose finger, electronic pen, or wireless mouse, which way best suits their style when operating the system. Some models offer a virtual keyboard which will pop up on the screen. This allows the user to type at ease without retuning to the computer to type in using the necessary keys on the keyboard. Less interruption and distraction to the flow of the use is imperative for effective teaching and learning.

The increase in “touch” technology tools has created an increase of the popularity with the interactive whiteboard market. There are a variety of brands and models available to school districts. School districts look at managing their funds related to technology seriously, especially because technology can be outdated quickly. Districts usually consult with their IT staff on which technology tools to purchase and, unfortunately, teachers are rarely consulted. Obviously this is where the system breakdown occurs. A staff member is in control of purchasing a technology tool in which he or she will not necessarily use. It is crucial for teachers to be aware of the make, model, and type of interactive whiteboard they are receiving or currently have in their classroom. It is common for teachers to explain to others they have a SMART Board™, when indeed they do

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