

# Interactive Whiteboards: Worth the Investment? A Case Study at Hawkins Elementary School

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*T. McDonough Central School District, located in a small city in upstate New York, is looking to invest some of its budget in new resources for Hawkins Elementary School. The School Board is strongly considering equipping each classroom in the school with interactive whiteboards. However, prior to doing so, the Board is inquiring about how the technology is currently being used. They are seeking input from teachers, students, parents, and other faculty members who have been exposed to the technology about this large-scale budget decision. For each stakeholder, the value and usefulness of the interactive whiteboards are different. Given the school board's proposed spending initiative, the entire school community appears to be debating how to spend this money and what future interactive whiteboards may have in their schools and classrooms.*

*Keywords: Education, Interactive Whiteboards, Learning, Social Science, Teaching, Technology*

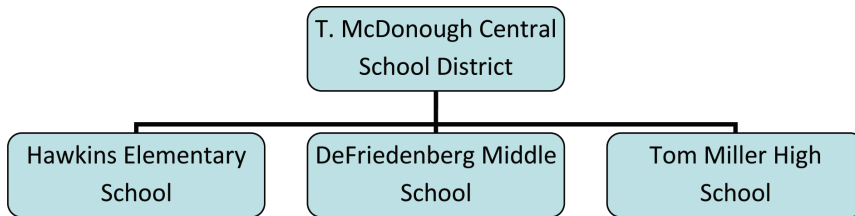
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## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The T. McDonough Central School District, located in a small city in upstate New York, is comprised of three schools – Hawkins Elementary School, DeFriedenberg Middle School, and Tom Miller High School (see Figure 1 for the organizational structure of the school district). Approximately 975 students overall are served by the district, with 450 students attending the elementary school, 225 in the middle school, and 300 in the high school. Students come from either the small, urban environment, or the suburbs. While none of the schools in the district are in a rural location, the broader geographic area is primarily rural so students have had great exposure to farms, sprawling hillsides, and mountain regions. The city and surrounding areas possess a fairly typical representation of socio-economic standing amongst its tax payers. The mix of urban and suburban creates distinct lines between the upper, middle, and lower income

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Figure 1. T. McDonough Central School district



families. Accordingly, parents and guardians in the school district possess a variety of economic resources as well.

Hawkins Elementary School houses kindergarten through fifth grade, with three classes at each grade level. Each class is comprised of 25 students and a fulltime, New York State certified elementary school teacher. There are a total of 18 teachers in the school, one Principal, one Vice Principal, a school counselor, a fulltime school nurse, a part-time music teacher, a part-time art teacher, and a part-time physical education teacher. The building itself is fairly new, having been built just four years prior and most of the equipment and furniture were newly purchased at that time as well. In addition to being newly renovated, the school is completely wired and two state-of-the-art computer labs occupy the building. The grounds are also well-maintained and there is a large playground and a designated field for organized sports. The school and location is quite safe, having no reported incidents of violence, save for a few isolated cases of vandalism outside the building on weekends.

Generally supported by the community, T. McDonough Central School District is a public institution and supported by taxpayer money and overseen by a school board with elected members. It has an overall operating budget of 210 million dollars and minimal debts due to conservative fiscal spending over the last five years. Although equipment and resources have been recently purchased to replace older holdings, building maintenance and new construction has not been undertaken in many years. Whether or not to repair or rebuild the middle school, in lieu of other spending, is a current issue of community and school board debate.

A final core component to the mission and strategic plan of T. McDonough Central School District is their commitment to remaining on the cutting edge of learning technologies and incorporate educational technologies into teaching and learning practices in an effective manner. A district wide technology plan has long been in place and was recently reviewed and updated. A set of technology benchmarks for both students and teachers has been in place for several years, and the district frequently sponsors professional development workshops for faculty and staff on the latest hardware, software, and teaching techniques. As with any district, some teachers are more technologically skilled than others, and some faculty embrace the use of technology with their teaching while others eschew it. The mission of the district however, believing as a whole that children need to possess, maintain, and constantly update their technology skills in order to be successful in today's society and job market, works to bring all teachers up-to-speed on the latest technological innovations. As part of their evaluation and review process, teachers are also expected to demonstrate proper integration of technology into their lesson plans and curricula.

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