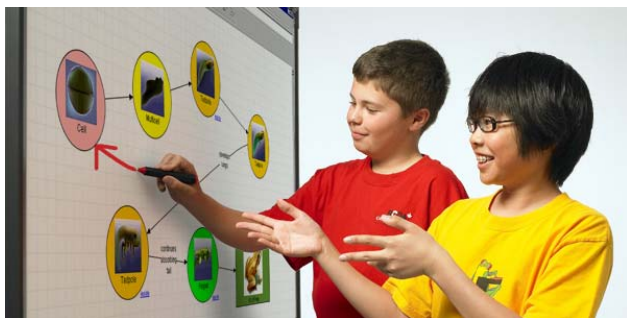


Guide on the Side

by Nancy Knowlton

It was in the early 1800s that a profound breakthrough occurred in teaching – the blackboard supplanted the slate as the tool of choice in the classroom. Instead of teaching children individually, teachers were able to stand at the front of the classroom, face their pupils and lead them through all manner of subjects and material. And so began the concept of whole-class teaching and learning.



Sage on the Stage

Many great teachers have stood at the front of their primary and secondary classrooms and ignited the will to learn in their pupils. They have lectured, explained, questioned, challenged, prodded and developed generations of citizens and leaders. Students have written their notes, undertaken their assignments and moved on with their lives.

While we may have a romantic view that education remains the same today as when we attended school, we have to face the reality that children, in fact, have changed. Much of that change has to do with the pervasiveness of information and, technology.

Today's Students

We hear words that describe today's learners such as open and accepting, multi-tasking, curious and willing to experiment, capable of thinking and investigating, fiercely independent, self-reliant, assertive discovery learners, extensive users of technology and prepared to learn anywhere, anytime. ⁽¹⁾

While a part of the class may involve the teacher demonstrating, explaining or lecturing, important segments of classroom time must address the changing nature of students and their expectations.

Many young children today will proudly announce, "I can do it myself" whether it's tying shoes or riding a bicycle at an early age. Much of that attitude and confidence translates into their needs in the classroom. As much as possible, they want to be in control of their learning.

Engaging Interactive Whiteboard Strategies

Transitioning to being a guide on the side, while challenging for some, can be a liberating experience for

both teachers and children. Making it work can be as easy as the following:

- Have pupils take charge of getting the interactive whiteboard, projector and computer up and running each morning and shut down each evening. It will save teachers time and involve the children.
- Let the pupils navigate websites from the interactive whiteboard. Like driving a car, they'll remember more when they are in control.
- Backseat driving is allowed. When other pupils are engaged enough to help, they are switched on to learning.
- Include some students in training on the whiteboard software to allow them to support the teacher.
- Incorporate as many opportunities as possible for students to show what they know through classroom presentations.

The interactive whiteboard can be the focal point for a digital learning experience in the classroom. The interactive whiteboard is undoubtedly fun, but more importantly, it can meet the needs of teachers and pupils for an engaging experience for all.

Teachers still need their special subject-matter knowledge along with the practiced skill of asking the right questions at the right time. By taking a step back and allowing students to take more responsibility for their learning, teachers just might find a shorter route to the end game of improved outcomes for all.

⁽¹⁾ *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*, Final Report, Alberta's Commission on Learning, October 2003. Online at <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/commission/printable.asp>.



Nancy Knowlton is the President and Co-CEO of SMART Technologies Inc., the world-leading supplier of interactive whiteboards. Nancy's husband and co-founder of SMART, David Martin, is the inventor of the interactive whiteboard category. Together they have built a company that is focused on delivering easy-to-use, yet feature-rich collaboration tools including the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Nancy can be reached at NancyK@smarttech.com.