

# Transforming Teaching and Learning

by Nancy Knowlton

It has often been said that if someone had fallen asleep 100 years ago and awoke today, the only thing that he might recognize is what takes place in a classroom. While that might be true in some locales, there is a transformation quietly taking place in hundreds of thousands of classrooms around the world.



Over the last fourteen years schools all over the world have been introducing interactive whiteboards into the classroom with varying degrees of success. Like any new tool, there was an early learning curve as to how to best implement interactive whiteboards. Imagining how interactive whiteboards can be used is the first step in creating a compelling vision about transforming teaching and learning using this remarkable tool. Many of the early experiments with interactive whiteboards produce the following considerations to help define a vision.

## A Whiteboard in Every Classroom

For teachers to commit to technology it needs to be consistently available. Permanently mounting the interactive whiteboard on the wall ensures that it is there, ready to go for every class.

## Adventuresome Teachers First

When funds are limited and not every teacher can have all of the technology tools, put the products in the hands of teachers who like to experiment and explore. Not only will they delight in the opportunity, but their colleagues will be eager to have the same opportunity when they see the success of the technology adventurers.

## Every Subject, Every Grade

It is not just mathematics and science classes that can benefit from an interactive whiteboard. Literally every subject at every grade level can benefit from a focal point for those parts of the class that involve whole class teaching and learning.

## For Teachers and Students

Interactive whiteboards encourage a very participatory model of instruction. In fact, many educators would argue that students should use the interactive whiteboards more than the teacher, particularly in the lower grade levels.

## Just-in-Time Training

Ensuring that teachers know just enough when they need to know it can really make a difference. Start with the simplest functions first (write, save, print). Then move on to the more elaborate functions available within the whiteboarding software.

## Time for Reflection

Teachers learn and grow when they can spend time with their colleagues, sharing their ideas about what worked and didn't work. Coupled with appropriate amounts of training, this practice can cause a teacher's use of technology to soundly develop.

## Infrastructure

Having a connection to the Internet in the classroom and digital content for each subject are often-cited elements that make for a successful implementation.

## Technology in Its Place

As important as technology can be in the teaching and learning process, it is not an end in and of itself. It's there to serve the needs of students and teachers and aid the learning process.

## Conclusion

Like no other technology before it, interactive whiteboards have the power to transform teaching and learning. While many teachers are comfortable with the sage-on-the-stage model, many educationalists today consider that a guide-on-the-side model leads to deeper understanding of concepts and true learning.

Interactive whiteboards are proving to be a comfortable transition for many teachers between these two teaching styles. Guiding pupils to take charge of their own learning through greater in-class participation is just the start. Opening the universe of learning to pupils and making them eager to reach out and grab it are just two benefits of using an interactive whiteboard in a 21st century classroom. A well-educated, competitive workforce and a civil society are the result.



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