

Can't Afford an Interactive Whiteboard?

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Acquiring new software or hardware can be a headache. In order for the new technology to be used effectively by staff and students, they need to have access to it. One of the benefits of SMART's Notebook software is that it allows students to download and use the software at home.

In our attempts to integrate technology into our lessons, our school looked at the newer technology of interactive whiteboards. Our biggest concern was getting the most value for our money. Most interactive whiteboards start at around \$1500 per board. This was a little too expensive for our small school so we started to look at other options. After careful consideration of the various programs and products available, we decided to buy 2 wireless SMART Airliner tablets. Along with the tablets, the school received an open licence for the Notebook software.

We were impressed that the SMART Airliner could transform our computer and projector into a makeshift interactive whiteboard. The SMART airliner is a wireless tablet that connects to the computer by a bluetooth adapter. There is no display on the tablet so it does take a little while to get the hand-eye coordination. Because the tablet is wireless, the teacher can walk around the classroom using the projector to illustrate problems that the students are having.

While we were happy to have the tablets, we were more excited with the software that came with it. With Notebook, teachers are able to write and modify files in MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint. A text recognition feature allows teachers to print or write in cursive and then change their writing into text. Using the camera option, portions of other texts can be copied into Notebook where they can be manipulated.

Notebook software can also help teachers teach their lessons. We found a great resource of information in Notebook for Mathematics. Since SMART is a Canadian company, teachers can access Canadian coins and bills in addition to other foreign currency. An animated compass and protractor can be used to show students how to measure angles and create triangles. "I never really understood how to use a compass to make triangles until I tried with the computer," commented one grade 6 student. The ability to use different coloured pens also helped my grade 5 students understand 2-digit multiplication. Using a different colour for each step helped students see how double digit multiplication works. Interactive dice and spinners are also available to help the students with their work both at home and in the classroom.

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Notebook software can also be used in other subjects. For Language arts, letters can be linked with sounds or pictures to help primary students learn phonics. For those of us using the new Pathways reading series, there are blank 2-column charts, Venn diagrams,

and T-charts ready for use. Students can also watch animated grammar lessons and interactive lessons on poetry or writing.

Art, Social Studies and Science are not ignored with Notebook software. Hundreds of clipart pictures and mini movies are available for students and teachers to use. When we were studying the human body and its systems, I used one of the activities where the students reassembled the respiratory system. After putting the parts of the respiratory system in place, they click on the resuscitate button. If they assembled the body correctly, he starts to breathe, opens his eyes and turns a pink colour. If they assembled him incorrectly, he flat lines, turns blue and dies. "Helping the man to breathe was one of the coolest activities ever. I now understand how the different parts work," reported one of my grade 5 students.

In addition to the activities contained in the Notebook software, additional lessons can be found on the SMART Educator's Website. On the website, activities and lessons are grouped by subject and grade level. These additional lessons and the upgrades to the Notebook software are free to teachers and students who use SMART products.

The SMART tablets and Notebook software have made an impression on the students in my class. With approximately \$500.00, a projector, and a computer, any teacher can transform their regular projector screen to look like the interactive whiteboards we were all envious of in Nashville. If your school is like mine and cannot afford an interactive whiteboard, take a look at the cheaper alternatives available. They can be just as useful in the classrooms and the kids really do love them.

Check out these links for interactive whiteboards and accessories.

[SMART Board](#)

[ACTIVBoard](#)

[PolyVision](#)

[Interwrite](#)