

SMART Board in my Classroom

Jeff Mathieson, Principal, Curtis-Horne Christian School, Regina, SK

When I returned from overseas to teach in Canada, I taught first at Sunwest School Division. The division requires teachers to integrate technology into classrooms on a regular basis. The division had invested heavily into Smart Boards and 90% of classes had this new technology. Later, I learned that Smart Boards are quickly changing the look of Canadian classrooms. [The SMART Board](#) proved to be an exciting and fun bit of technology for me to integrate into my teaching. It is an interactive whiteboard linked to a computer. Users write directly on the whiteboard and see their writing displayed on the computer's monitor. The whiteboard's easy touch screen intrigues students, converting their freehand scrawls into neat computer fonts. Their enthusiastic response to the board made me want one for Curtis-Horne Christian School. But the Smart Board is an expensive tool, impossible to purchase with school funds. Thankfully, I was able to use the SDACC technology grant and we have purchased two for our small school. Our SMART Boards arrived and we eagerly set them up. Then it hit me. What am I going to do with this?



Students are very eager!

As an educator I constantly assess my teaching strategies. In spite of my past experience, I found myself asking, what would be the SMART Board's benefits? Would it increase my student contact time? Would student on-task behaviour increase or decrease? Questions such as these led to me to do more research on the effectiveness of Smart Boards on student learning and my teaching. These are a few of the things I found...

Teachers found that the interactive and collaborative qualities of the Smart Board were important reasons for using the equipment. As well, teachers who used the Smart Board were extremely enthusiastic about the possibilities of the technology and a lot were inspired to use Smart Boards more in their lessons, gaining confidence by the fact that the Smart Board was reliable and easy to use.¹

Teachers also found that there were benefits to using a larger screen as opposed to a smaller screen. The Smart Board was an effective medium for teacher input to the whole class, and for reviewing the lesson. It enables teachers to present from the front, where they are better positioned to observe pupils' response.²

A study in a grade 8 class showed significant improvement in student attitudes both towards using computers in instruction and towards writing instruction.³ A study involving grade 1 math students showed significant growth in an experimental group vs. traditional



Grade 2 student practicing counting concepts

teaching. They found in science that use of SMART Board to visualize complex phenomena especially helps women gain knowledge in physical science classes.⁴



Teachers receiving training

SMART Boards assisted in improving language skills of special needs students, and as a result, stimulated positive participation in classroom activities. The teacher in this study commented, "The most significant attribute was the attention and motivation the students had when working with the board. During the course of the study, there was no diminishment in enthusiasm and the students continued to want to complete most tasks using the board. The collaborative interaction within the group improved over time. This sustained motivation and persistence with the use of the board are the two key factors in aiding with learning outcomes. "She noted an increase in the level of participation of all students in both grades. There appeared to be a correlation between the need for modification and the change in the degree of participation by the students."⁵

But the study I found most interesting was on student perceptions. I like the quote from this study. "Students were motivated and said that their learning had benefited from the use of the Whiteboard. They liked the idea of being able to see what they were supposed to be doing rather than being shown on their own computer. This links in with accelerated learning techniques involving visual rather than verbal instruction. The students said their attention was more focussed from having a large focal point and colour image within the room."⁶

All of this positive research was reassuring for me to incorporate this technology into my lesson planning. Introducing the SMART Board to my K-4 class brought much excitement – and some frustration for both the students and me. The students had never seen a piece of equipment like this, and at first it was an object of great curiosity and fascination. I knew that incorporating computers could bring technical difficulties and interruptions. With this in mind, I chose to use the Smart Board initially as a very expensive projector. I used it for playing music, showing video clips, and for PowerPoint presentations. It was a start, but I knew that there was so much more I could do with the Smart Board. I witnessed what it could do in my last school.

After class and on weekends, I started to privately experiment with the new technology and I took the free tutorial classes offered online. I decided that I would begin integrating the Smart Boards into math classes. I like to have inquiry-based learning in my math classes. I worked with each grade at the Smart Board with various math concepts. My grade two students and I were struggling with place value. After several unsuccessful attempts at teaching place value over a week, I did an interactive lesson on the Smart Board. I



Practicing writing and spelling

did not yet know how to design a lesson with Notebook (Smart Board software) so I downloaded a lesson after a

quick search. All of my students understood place value after one lesson! I googled more lessons and soon I was using the Smart Board daily in math class. I love seeing my students' excitement in learning math and found that my students were eager to learn, more motivated, genuinely excited, and grasping mathematical concepts very quickly.

We have now had the Smart Boards in our school for 7 weeks. We received an inschool Smart Board workshop during our 6th week. This two-hour workshop was included in the purchase of the board. When the workshop concluded, I was excited at the teaching and learning possibilities and I knew that this new tool will be a great benefit for our students. I now use the Smart Board for my language Arts lessons. The students write with the digital pen and change their cursive writing into text. It can only do this when their writing is very good. We are learning about capitalization, quotation marks, and adjectives. The students edit incorrect work on the Smart Board. They are not only interactive with the technology but with each other. They openly discuss the lesson and offer constructive assistance to their peers.



Many readers of this article may be familiar with this famous William Glasser quote, "We Learn . . . 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, 70% of what we discuss, 80% of what we experience, 95% of what we teach others."⁸ When my students were learning place value or editing on the Smart Board, they were reading, hearing, watching, discussing, experiencing, and teaching others. In all my years of education, I found it is the simplest tool to achieve these results.

Converting writing to text

Now, I use the Smart Board for my daily calendar and my morning routines. I place maps on the Smart Board in Social Studies and students identify and label provinces, cities, rivers, and lakes. We study the Earth and cells in Science and I am able to have the students construct cells and have the Earth rotate the sun. The grade two students saw the rotation of the earth thus causing night and day.

As we all attempt to integrate computer technology into our classrooms, I can now say that I teach with technology over 50% of every day. I can also see the day when this number can be 75% or higher.

I would like to finish with a list from Dr. Mary Ann Bell (2002), Assistant Professor of Library Science at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She addressed the question: "*Why do I like interactive whiteboards so much?*" and came up with the following list of answers:

1. The interactive electronic whiteboard is great for demonstrations....
2. The interactive electronic whiteboard is a colourful tool. Research indicates that students respond to displays where color is employed...
3. The board can accommodate different learning styles...
4. All ages of students respond favourably to board use...
5. Distance learning is an excellent setting for interactive whiteboard use...

6. One-computer classrooms can maximize the use of limited computer access...
7. The interactive whiteboard is an excellent tool for the constructivist educator...
8. The boards are clean and attractive tools...
9. Students with limited motor skills can enjoy board use...
10. It is interactive...
11. It can interface well with other peripherals....
12. The board is great for meetings and lessons where the participants need printed copies...
13. It is a kid magnet! ...⁸

References:

¹ “Interactive Whiteboard Evaluation (2000).” The MirandaNet Fellowship. Retrieved from <http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/publications/smartboard.htm>.

² “Using Electronic Whiteboards in Your Classroom: Benefits.” School District of Waukesha. Retrieved from <http://www.waukeshasschools.com/WIT/smartBoard/benefits.htm>.

³ Bell, Dr. Mary Ann. “Why Use an Interactive Whiteboard?” Teacher.Net Gazette, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 2002. Retrieved from <http://teachers.net/gazette/JAN02/mabell.html>.

⁴ “Using Electronic Whiteboards in Your Classroom: Benefits.” School District of Waukesha. Retrieved from <http://www.waukeshasschools.com/WIT/smartBoard/benefits.htm>.

⁵ Salinitri, Geri, Kara Smith, and Christopher Clovis. “The Aural Enabler: Creating a Way for Special Needs Kids to Participate in the Classroom Lesson.” SMART Research Library, Winter 2002. Retrieved from http://downloads01.smarttech.com/media/sitecore/en/pdf/research_library/language_arts/the_aural_enabler.pdf

⁶ “Interactive Whiteboard Evaluation (2000).” The MirandaNet Fellowship. Retrieved from <http://www.mirandanet.ac.uk/publications/smartboard.htm>.

⁷ William Glasser. (n.d.). Great-Quotes.com. Retrieved Tue May 31 07:15:26 2011, from Great-Quotes.com Web site: <http://www.great-quotes.com/quote/1283373>

⁸ Bell, Dr. Mary Ann. “Why Use an Interactive Whiteboard?” Teacher.Net Gazette, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 2002. Retrieved from <http://teachers.net/gazette/JAN02/mabell.html>.