



Thinking About IWB But Scared of the Learning Curve?

Interactive Whiteboards (IWB) have transformed the delivery of curriculum in the conventional classroom, but have they truly been accepted by those who play an active role in their inception?

There are many challenges associated with the introduction of new technology into the classroom, IWB included. In education, IWB are on the rise with schools investing large amounts of money and time into their implementation. The possible benefits are endless however there may still be a number of issues to overcome before we begin to see IWB used as a unique tool to improve student learning.

Why? Well, what we do know at this point is that there are often two main challenges that emerge when new technology is introduced in education. The first – finding the time at the individual teacher level to implement it properly. It takes hands-on practice over a period of time to develop fluency in any new skill and often the realities of daily life in a school can mean it simply doesn't happen.

The other contributing factor; a lack of technical confidence. When talking to teachers working in schools with IWB, one issue that keeps cropping up is that they are hesitant to use the new technology because they haven't had the 'in-service'. Part of this hesitancy lies in the belief that they must use the prescribed (read proprietary) software package. However with the new generation of IWB this need not be the case. In fact with the recently released 2Touch IWB teachers are encouraged to use their existing software in order to minimise the technological learning curve. This means that teachers can explore new pedagogies, instead of new drop down menus.

Although there are a vast number of excellent classroom software packages on the market, many of which come bundled with the IWB boards themselves making use of what is already at your disposal may actually be the initial problem solver. With a large number of teachers likely to have already created an arsenal of PowerPoint® presentations the use of Microsoft PowerPoint® in conjunction with IWB could bring some familiarity to the training process. One may even compare learning to use an IWB with learning to drive a car. When you first hit the road with your driving instructor they didn't send you hurtling down the freeway like

a deer in headlights now did they? Instead you probably did a series of test runs in and around your neighbourhood to getting you feeling more at ease with the daunting experience. Wouldn't it then seem logical to apply the same training method to IWB? Starting teachers off with a program that they already use is going to have greater results in the long run.

What a lot of people don't realise is that PowerPoint® can be used quite effectively to create dynamic and interactive lessons. A quick search of the internet will uncover a plethora of such resources. You can add hyperlinks to websites or other documents or other pages inside the same document. Teachers can even set up a resources page within each document that has hyperlinks to relevant websites, or specific web pages.

When using PowerPoint® software in conjunction with an IWB, presentations can become more collaborative and relevant to the audience. Teachers can record class feedback, make notes, add diagrams and save their work directly into the PowerPoint® File. In slideshow mode, the user has the ability to annotate a slide. A simple use of this is, if the teacher wanted to draw student's attention to the dot points listed on a particular slide they could place a tick beside each point as they are covered. An advantage with the 2Touch board here is the natural touch feature. This eliminates the need for any special pens. Teachers can even use the 2Touch IWB as a standard whiteboard due to its ceramic steel whiteboard surface.

All in all, it would be safe to say that a great number of teachers would already be familiar with PowerPoint®, and even capable (if they have not already done so) in creating useful presentations. Why then hold them back from the potential in IWB because they haven't yet attended the in-service? Let them get comfortable with the new physicality of IWB's without the additional head-ache of learning the aspects of yet another software package. Let teachers take one realistic step at a time. It takes practice, reflection and teamwork for emerging technologies to be accepted; therefore encouraging teachers to begin at the very basics can be a key factor in overcoming any initial reluctance or hesitancy. Let them loose. Then let those teachers



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