

A New Media Mindset

by Nancy Knowlton

As schools and districts think about the broad deployment of SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards, the discussion inevitably turns to whether it is possible and advisable to share them between teachers, classrooms or schools. After all, the thinking goes, putting one in every teacher's hands is expensive. But the greater expense comes from not considering how people accommodate change.



What – Limited E-Mail Access?

While it is always possible to share, it is not usually advisable. Imagine how teachers would have taken to using e-mail if they were told that they could use it only once a week, say, every Friday afternoon from one until two. There wouldn't be much buy-in or excitement about this proposition, and e-mail would not have become as useful a communications tool as it has. Quite honestly, the reaction to having limited access to an interactive whiteboard has, in my experience, been the same.

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When administrators ask teachers to use technology, the intention is not to modernize their teaching with technology. Asking teachers to adopt new technology is not like asking them to move from a typewriter to a word processor. Today's new media require a whole new mindset. Their introduction is tied to the belief that student-centered, technology-enhanced learning environments can better serve the diverse needs of 21st-century learners. Teachers are being asked to use technology as a means to an end – in the service of discovery learning, through which students actively create their own knowledge and understanding of curriculum concepts.

Change Management

Asking teachers to adopt this new teaching style and a range of new technologies at the same time can overwhelm even the strongest supporters of change. Administrators must make a serious commitment to teachers if they expect teachers to make a serious commitment to change. Technology tools must be readily available to teachers when they need them and training should be adequate right from the start.

No Setup Hassles

Permanently mounting the SMART Board interactive whiteboard and projector in the classroom is a strong

show of support. If the interactive whiteboard is mounted on the wall, a projector is either ceiling- or wall-mounted, and a computer is driving both, then little or no setup time is required for a teacher to start teaching.

Out of the Lab and into the Classroom

Recently schools have been dismantling computer labs and migrating computers and interactive whiteboards to the classroom so their use is embedded in all aspects of the curriculum. The idea is not to study technology *per se*, but rather to use it to enhance teaching and learning.

Monitoring Use

While it might be tempting to lay down some guidelines about the amount of time that technology should be used in a classroom, few benefits result from this approach. Teachers want the freedom to choose how to accomplish learning objectives. They do, however, appreciate thoughtful comments about helpful resources and techniques.

Teaching on the Go

Teaching doesn't always take place in a traditional classroom or in the same spot within the classroom. Consider a gym, locker room, auditorium or theater – coaches, teachers, principals and directors all have the opportunity to teach in such locations. For these situations, a moveable unit on a floor stand can be a great idea.

When There's Not Enough Money

Who does a principal give a SMART Board interactive whiteboard to when not everyone can have one? One of the most equitable options is to have teachers submit their vision for using it to improve outcomes. The principal can then select from among the applicants. With the most committed teachers using the SMART Board interactive whiteboard first, other teachers will see how they too can be successful when the time comes.

Commitment to Change

Teachers cannot make the transition to 21st-century teaching and learning without committing their time and energy. In return for that commitment, they need a commitment also. They need to know that whether they are in their classroom, the gym, the library or the locker room, the technology will be routinely available to help them engage their students in learning.

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