

Hygiene and ICT in the Classroom

by Nancy Knowlton

Many schools ask students to share an increasing number of classroom technology products, and parents want to know that their children's health is a priority. Parents are aware that schools and classrooms are often breeding grounds for colds and flu, so with children sharing facilities and now technology tools, understanding how to reduce the spread of germs and disease only makes sense.

The most effective way to maintain a healthy classroom environment is to actively encourage children who show signs of illness to stay at home until they feel better or they are not contagious. Teaching learners to monitor and maintain their own health and to be considerate of the health of others has to be a focus for both parents and teachers.

What strategies should be implemented to ensure good hygiene in a technology-enabled classroom?



Talk About the Issue

Making children aware of the need for good hygiene is an excellent first step. Explain why they must pay attention to hygiene – their own and their classmates' – so they can become part of the solution and not the problem.

Coughing and Sneezing

Encourage children to cough into their arm and sleeve instead of their hands if a facial tissue isn't readily available. This simple habit will keep germs from becoming airborne or trapped on surfaces that are used by large numbers of teachers and learners.

Wash Hands Often

Encourage students to wash their hands often, particularly if they accidentally cough into their hands. Teaching children to wash their hands properly with soap and water is an easy way to ensure that germs are not transmitted.

Keep Hands Away from the Mouth and Eyes

Help children understand that germs enter the body through the mouth, noses and eyes, so keeping hands out of direct contact with these places is a good way to keep germs and viruses out, too.

Pen-based vs. Finger-based Interactive Whiteboards

People sometimes ask us if pen-based interactive whiteboards are more or less hygienic than finger-based ones. The reality is that any public surface can be touched by multiple parties and can potentially spread germs. A pen is touched by fingers and hands, as is the surface of a finger-based interactive whiteboard, so one is not more or

less hygienic than the other. As well, users of pen-based boards are often instructed to rest their palms on the surface when writing, which causes germs to spread.

The reality is that both kinds of boards can spread germs, and they should be cleaned as needed along with other public surfaces in the classroom.

Disinfecting the surface of the SMART Board Interactive Whiteboard

Disinfecting the surface of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard is simple and safe to do with a 1:10 bleach-water solution (i.e., one part bleach and nine parts water). Any commonly available bleach works well. Wipe the surface of the board, including the pen tray and bezel, a couple of times a day or as needed. The bleach at this strength will not damage the surface of the interactive whiteboard.

Disinfecting Pens in the Pen Tray

The four pens in the SMART Board interactive whiteboard's pen tray are just pieces of plastic so they can be easily disinfected with the same diluted bleach solution used for the board. The pens can be individually wiped or immersed in the bleach solution.

Shared Tools

Help young children appreciate that technology products in the classroom are shared tools and therefore they need to keep them out of their mouths.

Most shared tools in the classroom can be wiped off with the bleach solution. If in doubt, contact the manufacturer for specific sanitizing directions.

Clickers (remotes) can also be wiped off with the same diluted bleach solution. Teachers may also consider assigning a specific clicker to children that they keep at their desk.

Safe, Simple, Effective

The most important strategies for good hygiene in classrooms with ICT products are the same ones that should be practiced in all classrooms. Tell children to stay home if they are sick and to wash their hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs.

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