

Five Ways Interactive Whiteboards can Improve Learning and Communication in the Classroom

In classrooms throughout the world, computers, digital projectors, and other high-tech tools are becoming as common as the traditional overhead projector. During the 1990s, US schools invested heavily in computer and networking hardware so that by fall 2002, 99 percent of all schools had Internet access, up from 35 percent in 1994.

Tracking growth of computers in the classroom and access to the Internet is the use of projectors and interactive whiteboards. These tools make it possible to integrate computer software and the Internet into classroom instruction to create an interactive and engaging learning environment.

Are you looking for ways to leverage technology more effectively in your classroom? If so, consider these five tips on ways to use projectors and interactive whiteboards in the classroom to aid learning, improve communication and save time.

1) Capturing, Printing and Distributing Assignments, Notes and Drawings

Interactive whiteboard solutions, such as Luidia's eBeam, are being used in math and science classes to capture notes and drawings as they are written on the whiteboard. Once they are saved to a computer, teachers can print copies of whiteboard notes and assignments, and post the information on their virtual workspaces on the internet.

By capturing and printing or emailing notes from the whiteboard, teachers make it possible for student to concentrate on learning, aiding retention and making it possible for students to be more engaged in the lesson. In addition, notes and assignments are available when students are ill or absent from class to keep them from falling behind.

2) Leveraging Interactive Media for Project Assignments

Teachers have begun to integrating technology as they design new class projects. As an example, a history instructor, tired of assigning traditional research papers, assigned a research project using interactive media tools.

For example, a teacher was looking for an alternative to the traditional PowerPoint presentation for a unit that covered 1960s and 1970s. She designed a project in which students chose a song from a list of songs in that era, found the lyrics, researched its social context, and found images and video clips to make a video of the song. The students used iMovie to create their interactive presentations.

The students loved the project, and the instructor enjoyed her role as facilitator, advising the students on the research and coordinating the work of the teams.

3) Promoting Study Group Learning and Teamwork

A business school has found a more effective way to disseminate ideas and information between students, faculty, and staff. Historically, an important component of this particular MBA program has been the open discussion and debate that takes place in classes of 40 to 60 students. These classes break down into study groups of six to eight participants who work interactively to generate ideas that are discussed later with the rest of the class.

The program already offered state-of-the-art computers, network, and presentation equipment for students and faculty. To capture and distribute the brainstorming created in the study groups and larger classes, the school has installed eBeam interactive whiteboard systems on their existing whiteboards in every classroom and lecture hall. The students and faculty use the tools to record and share notes and diagrams among and between study groups in real-time. Lecture notes are posted on a central website, so that students can have accurate copies of complicated charts and diagrams created during class.

The technology has dramatically improved the efficiency of learning and has been extremely well-received, not only by program participants, but also by internal staff. Staff members use the interactive whiteboards for recording ideas during their own brainstorming sessions.

4) Improving Staff Technology Education

Educating faculty and students on current technology tools and new solutions can be a challenge. Traditional technology instruction sessions in which teachers sign up for an hour-long class on PowerPoint or other applications simply don't work. Scheduling classes around the coaching, tutoring, and other out-of-class responsibilities for a large group of faculty can be impossible.

Instead, technology leaders within schools and districts can leverage interactive whiteboard and projection technology to hold training sessions in person or remotely via the Internet. This makes it possible to train staff on new software available locally, as well as new Internet-based tools at their convenience.

Not only is this an effective way to bring teachers up-to-speed on the new technology and tools available to them in the classroom, the teachers also appreciate the customized attention, and technology coordinators can learn about the faculty's curriculum needs. These sessions can also be recorded and made available for play-back at the staff member's convenience, which greatly simplifies scheduling.

5) Assisting with Home Schooling

The Edmonds Cyberschool in Edmonds, Washington employs a variety of techniques to reach pupils whose needs have not been met in traditional classrooms. The school operates as an alternative institution within the Edmonds School District and serves only home-schooled children. Students and their parents attend five hours of classes on-site each week at Cyberschool's facility and spend at least 20 hours per week in off-site activities.

To support the off-site activities, the school uses interactive whiteboard technology, email, instant messaging, and chat rooms to extend personal interaction beyond the few hours spent on campus each week.

The school's techniques have been especially effective in reaching highly visual learners who do not perform well in a lecture-based teaching environment. Cyberschool pupils learn a variety of visual organizing techniques to help them improve their listening and writing skills. Students practice organizing their thoughts graphically by drawing mindmaps, flow charts, and visual symbols on interactive whiteboards. The students can print, save, and publish their word maps and charts

As a result, the home-schooled students and parents get more support from the district and remain more engaged with the schools and curriculum.

About Luidia's eBeam Solutions

Schools around the world have already discovered the tremendous impact eBeam Technology can make in the classroom. At a fraction of the cost of other interactive whiteboard solutions, the highly portable and cost-effective eBeam systems turn ordinary whiteboards into interactive tools.

With eBeam, Handwritten notes, color diagrams and images can now be captured onto a Mac, PC or Palm™ Handheld - where they can be saved, printed, emailed or shared over the Internet, or local network, in real-time. Standard whiteboards can also be converted into interactive presentation screens with an eBeam System and the help of a data projector.

For more information see www.luidia.com.