

Interactive Whiteboards – Safety First

by Nancy Knowlton

Every day millions of parents entrust their most precious assets to teachers all over the world. Parents expect that their children will be educated, nurtured and developed in a safe and caring environment. As more interactive whiteboards and projectors are used in the classroom, the safe use of these products has to be a top priority for both pupils and teachers.



Supervision and Education

Children should always be supervised when they are in the classroom, whether there is equipment in use or not. Ensuring that pupils know how to use all equipment safely is a good start. Reinforcing that instruction every day ensures that they stay on track.

Following are some of the key considerations for the safe use of SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards.

Projector Light Path

Most interactive whiteboard installations are front-projection systems with a projector that is either ceiling-mounted or placed on a table or cart in front of the interactive whiteboard.

Projector manufacturers generally provide guidelines in their user manuals for the safe operation of their projectors. Common sense supports their main caution not to look directly into the light source. This means teachers and pupils should never stand in front of the board, looking past the projector's light path towards the class. They should step to the side of the board when facing the class.

Ceiling-Mounted Projector

This kind of projector installation is ideal. When securely mounted, the projector and its cables are up and out of the way of teachers and pupils. Only qualified staff with the proper equipment should service the projector.

Projector on a Table or Cart

If the projector has to be placed on a table or cart in the midst of the pupils, sufficient space should separate the children's desks and the table or cart. The projector should be safely secured to the cart so that a small bump will not cause it to fall off.

Wall-Mounted Interactive Whiteboard

Wall-mounting the interactive whiteboard means that the board is mounted flush to the wall, much like a blackboard or wall-mounted whiteboard. When determining the height at which to mount the interactive whiteboard, consider the height of the children using the board. They should be able to touch a good portion of the screen.

Where younger children may struggle to reach all areas of the interactive whiteboard, teachers should be ready to assist as pupils may direct, but they should never allow children to stand or kneel on a chair.

Notebook™ whiteboarding software offers the option to move tool bars to the bottom of the screen so younger users or pupils in wheelchairs can access the commands.

Cables

Simply put, cables need to be tucked out of the way so they do not pose a tripping hazard. The ideal set-up has the cables installed in the wall or under floor safety strips.

A Safety First Mindset

Taking a comprehensive approach to safety is the only way to proceed. Teachers and pupils should be aware that safety is everyone's priority. A few minutes at the start of the year or as new pupils join the class will ensure that everyone adopts a *safety first* mindset.

Safety First Tips

- Post safety reminders in the classroom
- Reinforce good behaviour; correct improper use
- Do not look into the projector light source
- Ceiling-mount the projector where possible
- Safely secure the entire length of all cables
- Never allow children to stand or kneel on a chair to access the interactive whiteboard

References

http://www.becta.org.uk/leaders/leaders.cfm?section=3_1&id=3173
http://www.ictadvice.org.uk/index.php?section=te&rid=152&catcode=as_co_m_pc_03&pagenum=1&NextStart=1&print=1

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