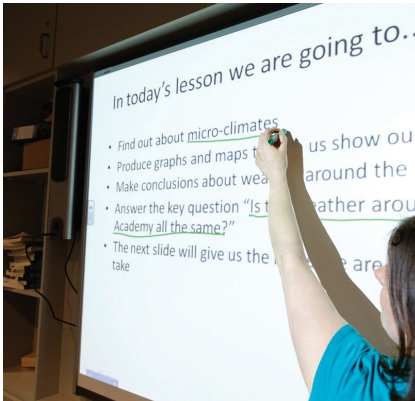


Burnley College

Collaborative solutions from SMART playing pivotal role



“Everyone found the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards so easy to use and picked up how to get up and running really quickly – the biggest change we found was not having to use a pen!”

Linda Fielding, Flexible Learning Manager, Burnley College

Burnley College is breaking the mould in terms of teaching and learning strategy. For the last ten years it has successfully harnessed the latest technology to support its evolution towards a more student-centric learning model, supported by an unwavering commitment to staff development that has been recognised by two prestigious National Training Awards in 2005 and 2006. This ongoing excellence was also reflected in a recent Ofsted report, which described the FE college – whose A Level and Level 3 Vocational Qualifications results are among the top 10% nationally – as “outstanding” and continued: “Highly effective and responsive staff development has led to a range

of innovative teaching strategies, including the use of Information Learning Technology (ILT), to support students’ independent learning.” This journey has been given fresh impetus by the move to a brand new, purpose-built site in September 2009, an £81 million development that offers huge improvements in sports and learning facilities and a state-of-the-art ILT infrastructure – with SMART Boards throughout.

“We have a very clear learning strategy that was put together by the Principal to point the college towards a more student-centric model where they take more control of their learning,” explains Linda Fielding, Flexible Learning Manager at Burnley College. “Instead of a teacher talking for an hour, they give a five-minute introduction at the beginning of the lesson and the students then break into groups to actually do things rather than just listen.”

The new building is equipped throughout with 120 new SMART Boards, as they were found to be much easier to use than the college’s 40 old whiteboards. The decision to upgrade to SMART Boards presented the college with a new staff development challenge and a training programme began last year with three SMART Boards installed side-by-side in the college’s Teacher Innovation Centre (TIC). “Three groups of teachers trained collaboratively, and to make it competitive each participant was given just 15 minutes to figure out how to switch it on and produce something on it,” explains Linda Fielding. “They were then set a homework task – such as setting a

quiz or a competition – which they had to bring back the next day. Everyone found the SMART Boards so easy to use and picked up how to get up and running really quickly – the biggest change we found was not having to use a pen! The training is now part of the college’s two-day ‘Classroom Essentials’ programme for new teachers, and Moodle (our VLE) and SMART Boards are the first technology they learn how to use.”

One of the most notable features of the new building is that it’s divided into six large Active Learning Zones (ALZs) – one for each of the college’s main divisions - instead of the traditional Classrooms. “We trialled ALZs last year,” explains Julian Clissold, Assistant Principal (Capital Projects), “and they were a tremendous success. Even with six or seven classes going on simultaneously there were no discipline problems and no high noise levels.” These wireless-enabled, multi-purpose spaces are designed to offer maximum flexibility for large group, small group or 1:1 learning and support a variety of teaching styles. Each ALZ features configurable furniture, one or two SMART Boards for briefing students and enabling them to demonstrate their work, a multi-function printer/scanner, a library of books and other resources specific to the particular division, and a secure cupboard full of laptops. Students simply pick up their allocated laptop, log on with their password and get instant access to their own work and the VLE resources.

An essential element of how the college uses SMART Boards is SMART Notebook™- the powerful,



award-winning content creation software that forms the hub of the entire SMART product range. Notebook provides an agnostic software platform and therefore easily integrates to existing systems such as Mac, Pc and Linux. It's ease of use is contributing to changes in pedagogy at the college, leading to a more collaborative style of teaching and learning. "The basic principle with ALZs is that there's no formal teaching, and students can work at their own pace," Linda confirms. "There was some nervousness before we started, but teachers and students all love the ALZs. Whilst it is still early days, we believe that the use of Notebook software will help support our aims of active learning and encourage greater student engagement."

The impetus behind the more extensive use of SMART Notebook at Burnley College may come from an unexpected source: "We now have a dedicated ALZ staff of 14, whose role is not only to act as librarians looking after the books and resources in their particular Active Learning Zone and distribute laptops, but also to assist teachers with their preparation," concludes Linda. "I think that the ALZ staff will be a major driving force behind the creation of learning materials. But we're still pushing forward learning on all fronts and we want everyone to be more creative and innovative in their use of Notebook software as we develop our student-centric learning strategy even further in the future."

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