

Case study



Fernhill College Put more life into learning

Today's young people are 'media savvy', brought up on computer games, the Internet and television. What chance do teachers have in competing with technology such as this?

By using SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards, Fernhill College might just have the answer. "If children come to school after being bombarded with new media and they sit in a lesson in front of a teacher with a piece of chalk they are not going to be turned on to learning," says Richard McFahn, Advanced Skills Teacher for History in Hampshire and teacher at Fernhill Secondary School in Farnborough. He has found a way of bringing the past to life, with the help of SMART's Notebook™ software.

Richard will often start a lesson with an historical image projected onto a SMART Board. He can then encourage pupils to highlight a section of the picture using the special highlighter tool, or they can drag words across the screen to describe what they see in front of them. The touch sensitive display connects to the classroom computer and digital projector. Richard can control computer applications directly from the display, write notes in digital ink and save work to share later.

"As an introduction to 1066 and the Norman invasion, I start with a picture of Edward the Confessor from the Bayeaux Tapestry," he explains. "The technology allows me to reveal half the picture and ask the pupils to circle the person they think is Edward. Next to the image there is a list of words describing how he looks: old, weak, unhealthy and so on. They can touch the words and drag them onto the picture. When I reveal the full picture of Edward I explain that by the time the tapestry was made, Edward was neither old nor weak, but dead! It was Edward's death that led to the fight over who should succeed him, culminating in the Norman invasion, so the visual image from the Bayeaux Tapestry draws the class in to an exploration of the key issues surrounding 1066."

Challenge

To use new technology to take lesson planning to the next level and create some of the most interactive, immersive classes in the country.

SMART solution

SMART Whiteboards used in conjunction with Notebook software by teachers with a real thrill for making the most of the potential such cutting edge technology can bring.

Result

Pupils that can enjoy the benefits of genuinely interesting, interactive education that helps to bring lessons to life.

In addition to Notebook, proprietary software is available for subjects across the curriculum but Richard is an innovator who prefers to use material he has researched himself, from books, websites or moving images.

He is currently working on an exciting project using clips from Sergei Eisenstein's film 'October' which depicts the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917. The famous Russian director used thousands of extras to portray a dramatic assault, but the reality was that Bolshevik insurgents walked into the palace virtually unchallenged. This would not have been seen as particularly heroic, so Eisenstein was commissioned by the government to produce the 1927 film commemorating and glorifying the revolution. Richard's intention is to use the scenes from October to illustrate how propaganda exaggerates or distorts historical events.

"Apart from one or two additions or minor adjustments, I am ready to go. Preparation is the key and if it's done well it does save teachers' time in the long term," he explains.

Richard prepares his lessons in advance and saves images for future sessions rather than laboriously going through all the slides in Microsoft® PowerPoint®. Planned lessons, complete with pictures, cartoons or photographs, are saved on the hard drive for the following year's key stage 3 and 4 pupils and so that other staff are able to benefit from his work. Any computer application – Internet sites, CD-Roms and DVDs – can be used to provide archive material, eyewitness accounts and relevant texts.

While Richard advocates using whiteboards, other subject teachers need to feel comfortable about using the technology before they start using it in class. Investing time in training teachers and helping with lesson preparation will pay dividends.

Richard's teaching material is so interesting it comes as a surprise to hear him admit that he 'used to be a technophobe.' He goes on to claim, "SMART Boards are so easy to use anyone can have a go. They're so simple you can learn the basics in an hour."

Another advantage of the interactive whiteboard is the fact that it can be used by a group, or even a whole class, at any one time. This is in contrast to the traditional computer, which encourages solitary working or, on rare occasions with plenty of planning, some small group activity. And SMART Boards include such popular features as the pen tray, finger-touch control and the easy to use Notebook software.

Richard and his pupils enjoy the benefits of interactive learning as a two-way process. Gone are the days when teachers talked at children sitting silently in rows. Now, interactive whiteboard screens are large and clear, allowing everyone to see them. They provide a focal point in the classroom, even more so since SMART launched their new 600 series, offering larger screens for bigger classrooms, and 15-watt speakers to enhance the delivery of multimedia content.

By using SMART Boards there is a two-way interaction between teachers and pupils; each is able to respond to the other party's views and learn from their ideas.

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Richard McFahn, Advanced Skills Teacher for History, Fernhill College.

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and other group collaboration tools. The award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboard is the most widely installed interactive whiteboard in the world.

Many school jurisdictions have standardised on the product, which is used to provide interactive learning opportunities and enhance student achievement in more than 450,000 classrooms spanning every U.S. state, every Canadian province, every Local Authority in the UK and in more than 100 countries worldwide. SMART products also include interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage, wireless slates and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART's education customers include New York City Board of Education (U.S.), Oxford University (UK), Kobe City Board of Education (Japan), Barrier Public School (Australia), University of Ottawa (Canada), United World College (Singapore), Stephen-Hawking-Schule Neckargemuend (Germany), Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (U.S.) and Harvard University (U.S.).

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 900 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Ottawa, and offices in Bonn, Tokyo, China, New York City and Washington, DC. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. In 1992 SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel® Corporation that resulted in joint product development and marketing efforts, and Intel's equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. For more information, visit www.smarttech.com.

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Steljes creates opportunity for partners, customers and end users by pioneering innovative technologies that enable people to interact and communicate more effectively while working and learning.

