

Research Studies – Learning from Others

by Nancy Knowlton

A number of years ago, when I was visiting a European country, someone asked me about the benefits of using interactive whiteboards. I faithfully recounted the findings of various research studies while the person listened attentively. When I finished, she waved her hand dismissively and said, “Yes, but we will have to learn this for ourselves and do our own research.” I commented about what a shame that was because the research of others could speed the adoption of interactive whiteboards in her country’s schools.

Many teachers and administrators ask about research on the use of interactive whiteboards in the classroom. People want to know what impacts are documented in research studies and how that research might be applicable within their own environment. With limited funds, accountability at an all-time high and a focus on individual student achievement, it is no wonder that technology product buyers are putting more emphasis on supporting their purchasing decisions with credible research.



Supporting research since 1997

SMART has been supporting independent action-based research into interactive whiteboards for about twelve years. Most of that support has involved providing our products for the duration of the research project. In return, researchers give SMART permission to publish and share their findings. Never have we directed or intervened in the research of teachers, teachers-in-training and professors.

SMART’s support has resulted in a considerable body of research that is freely available to our customers, prospects and other interested parties. Much of the early research came from a few countries – the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada. Not coincidentally, these countries were early adopters, interested in looking more deeply into the effects of using a new technology product.

The findings

The findings of these studies indicate that using SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards can

- Improve student engagement
- Improve motivation and attendance
- Improve review and retention
- Improve teacher productivity
- Support multiple learning styles and special needs students

Localized research

Increasingly, like the woman many years ago who said she needed to do her own research, people request local research data. They understand that research has been undertaken elsewhere, but they want to see how the use of interactive whiteboards affects the performance of schools and students in their area. Is local research the only way to validate the value of a new product? What can be learned from research undertaken in other locales, and how can it be used?

On occasion, there isn’t time to undertake local research. A viable alternative could be an intense proof of concept – a pilot project in which a school or district outfits a few classrooms with interactive whiteboards in order to demonstrate whether they will receive the benefits they expect from the adoption. It’s a living lab of real-time experiences that can support a decision to adopt.

When making decisions about interactive whiteboard purchases and implementations, teachers and administrators may also find it helpful to balance information from different sources. Validated, unbiased, independent research along with an insider’s understanding of local differences can provide decision makers with information tailored to the needs of their region.

Learning quickly

In education, as in the corporate world, there is an irrefutable need to learn quickly, learn well and learn a lot. Evaluating existing research in the context of local needs can hasten the technology adoption process and speed up positive effects on learning.

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