

INTERACTIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES:



Researching the role of interactive whiteboards
and other digital tools

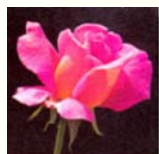
Interactive Learning Communities: Researching the role of interactive whiteboards and other digital tools

Practising teachers in China, Mexico, South Africa and the United Kingdom are participating in a three year programme, 2005-2008, conducted by MirandaNet Fellows. The aim is to find out how Promethean ACTIVboards and linked digital tools can assist in raising achievement and in the management of change across four nations.

The findings aim to provide detailed evidence and advice for educators and policy makers who are charged with improving education in the long term, and for teachers and teacher advisers who need access to creative ideas and advice. The project focuses on the use of interactive

whiteboards and other digital tools by 1,000 children and 100 teachers in schools in China, Mexico, South Africa and the United Kingdom. In each of these countries the government is funding the infrastructure needed to embed Information and Communications Technologies into the curriculum.

The project also supports ten practice-based research projects in each of the communities of teachers who all won national competitions. This practice-based research community will present and publish case studies, which are intended to facilitate the sharing of knowledge process amongst teachers across the world.



The UK projects are now in their third year, and the impact of ACTIVboards and the technology has changed expectations about what teaching and learning should be for both teachers and pupils. Resource banks and learning objects are shared between colleagues; materials and revision materials are available to pupils through school intranets; a far greater sense of pupil involvement

in learning can be observed and pupil enjoyment is enhanced. The novelty of ACTIVboards may have worn off, but their effectiveness is greater than ever.

- “ I can't begin to imagine teaching without my IWB, particularly for literacy and numeracy ”
- “ The children are much more aware of the role of technology in their learning and have become competent when using IT themselves. They tend to focus for greater periods of time and their attention is at its best when there is an opportunity to work the board themselves ”
- “ The ability to save work done in class is very useful both to pupils who can access it from the school network ”
- “ Pupils benefit from clear visual impact and retain information more readily ”



Auckland Park Preparatory School and St. Mary's School, both in Johannesburg are using ACTIVboards to involve the entire school community in new approaches to learning. An intensive staff training programme promotes greater pupil interaction and engagement and higher levels of concentration. As for the teachers, the user-friendly software has refreshed ideas and enthusiasm among the staff who are displaying renewed excitement about lesson preparation. ACTIVboards have stimulated innovative thinking about enriching teaching and learning. Pupils now use the board effectively in assignment presentations and have expectations that all lessons be taught through this medium.

- “ It's so cool! ”
- “ Lesson preparation has become an interesting and engrossing activity ”
- “ I can complete more content in each lesson ”
- “ ACTIVboards should be installed on every wall of the classroom! ”

The teacher-researchers, collaborating through workshops and online, will be sharing their interactive whiteboard ideas and exchanging resources. The project also actively involves parents and their local communities, which in turn improves citizenship responsibility and racial harmony. Each school believes that by giving young learners a voice, their opportunities for democratic participation and sense of social worth and belonging will be enhanced.

Teachers in each country are e-mentoring each other as they discover the similarities and differences in their professional preoccupations, challenges and triumphs.



Pupils and staff in three schools in Nuevo Leon, Monterrey, Mexico are integrating ACTIVboards into every aspect of their curriculum. The special focus of their work, however, is Citizenship. The ACTIVboards provide the creative focus for a range of pupil-centred activities that include research, investigative reports, discussion and the creation of cartoons. The

teacher-researchers are reporting a profound change in attitudes towards school and learning among all their pupils. The pupils now play an active part in their own learning and as a result, attendance, behaviour and attainment have all improved.

- “ If I don't have the ACTIVboard, I can't understand/learn English ”
- “ It makes my job easier. All the great materials that I can use in an instant, make my class more interesting ”
- “ I understand the class more and I don't like to play truant ”



Both of the practice-based research centres in China face a similar problem: how to promote active and involved learning, when classes are large. Teachers are tackling this challenge by using ACTIVboards and the ACTIVstudio software to facilitate student group work, enabling a change in pedagogy and shifting pupil and student expectations of learning. Pupils and students are beginning

to see themselves as active agents in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. At the same time, teachers are able to create more individualised learning materials than previously possible. These materials can be shared widely.

- “ I want to say they are very useful for our study ”
- “ It makes lessons more fun and colourful ”
- “ I think that every class should have one! They are a new necessity ”
- “ Inter-active boards are much better, more colourful and easy to use ”
- “ The interactive white boards are really great and I enjoy doing activities on the board ”
- “ ACTIVboards rock! ”



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The Miranda Net Fellowship is a professional organisation which strives to use ICT to make life better for learners in schools and communities in twenty five countries.

www.mirandanet.ac.uk

The Membership has recently developed World Ecitizens, a charity which offers free citizenship resources, a virtual learning environment and a web-gallery so that young people have a voice in world affairs.

www.worldcitizens.net

