

Interactive teaching and interactive whiteboards - an overview

What is good interactive whole class teaching and how can interactive whiteboards help?

Why is the issue important?

Interactive whole class teaching has been identified by the National Strategies as a way of helping to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. The question is how interactive teaching is actually achieved and how IWBs can be used such that they help make teaching truly interactive.

What did the research show?

The researchers found that whole class teaching was typically characterised by traditional question and answer sequences directed by the teacher, with 64% of talk time being taken by teachers and with boys involved more than girls. True interactive teaching, which was more helpful to learning, was characterised by a more equal distribution of dialogue between the teacher and pupils. Pupils were generally very positive about their experience of IWBs, especially in providing a new mode for learning which chimed with pupils' increasing exposure to new technology. But the introduction of IWBs did not, by itself, automatically change the way teachers taught or interacted with pupils.

How was this achieved?

Those teachers who avoided the traditional question and answer sequence used the following techniques:

- encouraging peer to peer feedback
- allowing longer responses to questions
- engaging genuinely with pupils' ideas and comments
- maintaining flexibility in lessons, and allowing pupils to shape and direct lessons
- using open questions

But it was the purpose of questions and responses to pupils' that made a difference – closed questions could be just as helpful as open ones if the teacher was intent on opening the classroom for learning conversation.

Aspects of IWBs were identified as having potential to enhance whole class interactive teaching. In particular, IWB use over time led to more open questions, more whole class teaching, faster paced lessons and more, though shorter pupil answers. The researchers suggested that for IWBs to be used to their full potential, they are best saved for when they can add most to a lesson.

How was the research designed to be trustworthy?

The project involved the detailed observation of 184 lessons conducted by 30 Year 5 and 6 teachers from twelve schools, over two years. All interactions in every lesson were recorded electronically. Many of the lessons were video recorded and feedback was gained from pupils and teachers on their perceptions of interactive teaching and IWBs.

What are the implications?

The study showed the importance of teachers:

- planning lessons to include questions aimed at higher order thinking, and using IWBs to motivate pupils to get engaged with the task
- focusing intently on opening up dialogue
- providing good quality responses to pupils
- finding ways of using IWBs more imaginatively and interactively
- giving pupils greater opportunity to use IWB technology themselves
- questioning why types of attention differ so much between boys and girls.

What do the case studies illustrate?

The case studies show, for example, how:

- a group of secondary school teachers working together on whole class interactive teaching skills came up with five pointers for improving practice in this area, including the development of questioning and feedback techniques
- a pupil benefited when her teacher slowed the lesson down and reduced the number of closed, whole class questions
- an IWB can be used to good effect, with teacher preparation and a willingness to make alterations during the lesson
- IWBs can be used to initiate learning through stimulating conceptual thinking and kinaesthetic learning.

[Read the RoM](#)