

No: FE41
Title: The Use of Interactive White Boards in the Further Education (FE) Classroom With Entry Level Students (Promethean and Smart Boards)
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Aims

- To consider the use of the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) within the classroom environment
- To establish the beneficial and non-beneficial uses of IWBs within the classroom environment
- To show how IWBs can build confidence and self-esteem with some learners

Background

I work as an Early Years Lecturer within a small FE College, situated in the South-West part of Co. Durham. I am based at the college's main site and the specialist part of my teaching lies with Entry Level Childcare Students. The group in question have often left school with little or no formal qualifications; some may have left school early due to personal reasons, or may have been very poor attendees. Due to previous background educational experiences the group often prefer short and dynamic sessions which also offer a variety of teaching methods. Individuals can lack concentration and motivational skills and consequently need extra support and individual attention throughout sessions.

Use of Interactive Whiteboards within the classroom environment

As a Test Bed centre and a department saturated with ICT equipment, Childcare Training offers a great opportunity for students learning to flourish through technology. Each classroom consists of either an interactive smart board or Promethean board, with an individual networked PC attached as well as use of laptops, digital cameras, video recorders, use of internet and the voting system. Students are actively encouraged to use all technological equipment where appropriate/applicable. As some students have progressed into our FE College from secondary schools that have also been Test Bed centres, it is felt that there is now an expectation that they are going to continue in an environment where all technological equipment is provided, as this is to what they have become accustomed. However, students who come to us who are not from a Test Bed Secondary School don't have such an expectation and may be pleasantly surprised at the facilities on offer.

Learning Environment

As a lecturer working with these fragile learners the IWB is a vital commodity. During my delivery, it is imperative to consider each individual's learning style and to ensure that their needs are met. As stated by Lisa (CACHE Entry Level student), "We can write things on the board that we have talked about in class and it is good when you can go onto the web for further information". During induction week each student is asked to write about their individual learning style and how they feel they best learn. As schemes of work and session plans are

devised each learning style needs to be included and variety ensured. In practice this might mean, using images from a gallery to clarify points for visual learners, or for learners who are more responsive to hands-on learning, I would include situations where learners are more encouraged to do their own demonstration via the IWB. The IWBs are an excellent tool for interaction and presentation skills. Kay agrees as she comments that "You can go up to the board and have a go yourself, it is really useful to use and you can go on to the internet to get pictures"! The board is like a blank canvas that can be added to and its uses are endless, it has such potential!

Interactive Whiteboards allow presentations to be varied

During sessions my learners can compile simple PowerPoint presentations that they can deliver to their peers as well as coming to the front of the class to write their ideas/answers on pre-set presentations. The galleries are a particularly useful tool, as they enable learners to drag and drop objects from the gallery into notepad and then add onto it. This software is beneficial as it is encouraging learners to get out of their seats and participate and interact with their peers. It is also excellent for the visual learners within the group and for the students who prefer group working. However, as with every piece of technology, there can be some downsides. Katie states that "she doesn't like going out to the front of the class to write on it" and Gemma agrees by adding "Sometimes the board is difficult to write on, if you don't hold the pen right it puts lines all down the board."

Developing Learners' Confidence to Perform Academically

As an FE Tutor working with these learners, I feel that the use of Interactive Whiteboards can enhance building their self esteem and confidence, as it encourages further participation and interaction with their peers during the sessions. However, from the onset, it is a gradual process for learners to be encouraged to come up to the board and put their own ideas and suggestions forward, and it is vital not to pressurise learners to feel as though it is compulsory to have to present something on the board to the other students.