

P39 The changing role of the teacher in using the IWB

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"I like the Interactive whiteboard because Miss Eaton isn't the only one who teaches us things" (Lauren aged 9)

The IWB has transformed learning and teaching in my Year three and four classroom. It has made the collaborative Classroom become possible. By using the IWB the children are immersed in stimulus. They are focused, interested and involved and therefore progress is made. The IWB is colourful in itself, motivating, appealing and interactive. It has improved engagement and interactivity of the children in my class, and as a result raised standards and improved collaboration and self esteem. It is only through the rewarding experiences that I have encountered that I have become so enthusiastic about the technology. The children in my class have proved to me that the IWB works.

I felt it necessary to begin by sharing my initial thoughts and feelings when faced this with new technology. In Durham Test bed all schools took a brave step and removed all original blackboards and whiteboards. At first all staff including myself felt excited at the prospect of this colourful interactive technology. We were very impressed by all the interactive tools the software offered, and felt fired up to use it in our classroom. However, after the demonstrator had left the building, panic set in. It looked wonderful, but very complex, new, and new is always scary. Nevertheless we all began to play with the software over the forthcoming weeks, both at home and with our children. The new technology was colourful, interesting, interactive and most importantly the children seemed to be hooked. It seemed that this new technology couldn't fail to improve learning and teaching.

At first we began to use the IWB interactively. I stood at the front of the classroom and led the session as I always had, but amazingly the children could come and make things happen on the IWB. For example I could ask them to come up and drag a word into the correct place within a sentence, or I could ask them to come and reveal an answer to a question in Numeracy. This model of teaching seemed to be working. The children were engrossed and were extremely keen to have a turn. The parents were impressed by how colourful and interesting the board was, and many comments such as "It wasn't like that when I was at school, we only had a boring old blackboard" could be heard. The IWB certainly looked impressive, but pointing to a word and asking children to drag it into a different place didn't seem like real effective interactive learning.

As a reflective practitioner I began thinking about my practice with the IWB. The children were interacting with the board. They were coming up to click, drag, and rub out objects when asked. However I felt it was very much teacher directed. It didn't seem that the children were actively learning and interacting, any more than they had done with the old style whiteboard. Being told I felt that I needed to experiment with new ways of using the board.

Quite hap hazard before a Numeracy session I said to my LSA "What do think would happen if I sat at the side of the class and allowed the children to front the class and lead the session?" Without any reservations the children absolutely rose to the challenge. They interacted effectively with each page of the flipchart and were completely engaged. For example they ordered large balloons with 2 digit numbers on, highlighted multiples of 5 on a 100 square and partitioned 2 digit numbers into tens and units. With careful questioning the children explained their reasoning and discussed their learning collaboratively. The learning became personalized, appropriate and relevant. All of a sudden they seemed as if they didn't need me to stand at the front and be the teacher, rather it was more effective to sit at the side and facilitate the children in exploring, discussing and consolidating their learning. For example the whole class attempted to solve a mathematical puzzle on the interactive whiteboard. The children actually asked questions to each other in a bid to understand and solve the puzzle. When I stood at the front the children seemed to rely on me to scaffold them in solving problems and questions. They were passive, responding in a restricted way. When I sat at the side the children interacted with each other to solve the

problem. All of a sudden, I wasn't the means to learn or solve a problem, they were, collectively.

It seems that in my experience children learn by doing, and the IWB reinforces this. The IWB gets children excited about learning when they become active participants. It engages all children, and the "power of the pen" switches children on. I felt I was actually responding to children rather than vice versa. Using the IWB the children can interact and manipulate their learning allowing the teacher to learn more about their understanding. In my collaborative classroom, you would find less teacher talk and far more investigation, discussion, reasoning and peer tutoring. For example in a Numeracy example the children were investigating number sequences using the spot light tool. All children were on task and anticipated the next number. They asked questions, and shared ideas in order to establish the number pattern hidden.

The IWB encourages children to think for themselves and explain their ideas, consolidating and extending understanding. With careful planning all abilities can interact within one session and therefore learning across the wide spectrum of ability is effective. Due to the nature of how the IWB is used within the classroom, it is important that flipcharts are prepared in a way which allows the children from different abilities to interact. It is also vital that the activities are planned in an investigative way. For example jumbling the instructions for making a cake in literacy, allows the children to discuss and collaborate to reach the correct order. Rather than simply typing the instructions for the children to read as a mere replacement to a projector. When using the IWB teachers can carry out quality formative assessment with targeted questions, as the board can often highlight gaps in children's learning. In one literacy example the children were asked to improve a simple sentence written on the IWB. Many children contributed in different ways. Some poorer ability children simply added a full stop to the end of the sentence, whilst others extended it into a complex sentence. This highlighting tool is also effective when asking the children to highlight why a piece of writing is successful. Sharing success criteria in writing has raised standards for all children.

In my classroom the IWB encourages the children to think for themselves. In an informal interview with the children they pointed out that the IWB helped them to learn because "You have to actually do it, instead of your teacher just telling you. You have to actually use your brain and think for yourself" (James aged 8). Quite surprisingly they seemed to feel that they were actually working harder when using the IWB. Nevertheless the IWB was "Way, way more fun and interesting than before". Furthermore the children seemed to think that their learning had been enhanced with the IWB "You learn better when you are at the board, rather than listening to the teacher" (Jessica, aged 9). Indeed it seems that the children can see the rewards of interactive teaching, "When the teacher tells you, you forget, but when you do it yourself you remember" (James, aged 8). Reassuringly the children feel that the IWB has been a positive change in the classroom. In fact when I asked them how they would feel if they went to another school without one, they said quite horrified "Oh no, boring!"

Throughout the change my LSA has commented on the benefits she has observed for SEN children without being directly asked to do so. "The children are far more engaged than before and are keen to interact and have a turn" (LSA). She actually felt that the IWB had raised standards by the way it had stimulated the children to want to learn. In terms of Workforce Reform the interactive way the IWB is used within my classroom has enabled the children to steer their learning under the supervision of my LSA, allowing me to be released for Planning, Preparation and Assessment time. The children are empowered to use the IWB, interact in their learning, and collaborate effectively as a whole class. In an observation of teaching and learning in my class, the observer commented on the independence of the children and the careful planning of the IWB flipchart.

It has been exciting to explore new ways of learning and teaching with the IWB and it has certainly proved to be a change for the better. Using the IWB in this way has broken the transition model of the teacher being the font of all knowledge. Children are thinking more and interacting more. As a result of this empowerment the children have developed high standards of teaching and learning. This has had connotations for supply teachers who cover in my class. Feedback from my LSA and supply staff has suggested that the children have

been very distracted and switched off, when faced with the model of teacher standing at the front "teaching the class" and using the IWB. Therefore the logical recommendation would be for my LSA to cover my absences and work as she does, modelling my teaching and learning style. I could plan both interactive flipcharts for the children to interact with at the start of the session, and personalised learning activities for them to engage in throughout the development of the session.

The IWB has allowed me to explore new ways of learning and teaching in my classroom which has developed the independence, confidence, self esteem, collaboration and thinking skills of the children in my class. It has been a huge change in terms of how learning and teaching happens in my class but it has most certainly been a change for the better. For this change to occur it relies on the teacher loosening the reigns of control, taking a risk, and having confidence in the children, the technology and the support staff.