


**TEACHERS.NET  
GAZETTE**
**JANUARY  
2002**

Volume 3 Number 1

**COVER STORY**

Harry & Rosemary Wong say, "All effective schools have a culture and it is the information one gets from a culture that sends a message to the students that they will be productive and successful." This month the Wongs offer more examples of successful school and classroom management...

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**Teacher Feature...**
***Why Use an Interactive Whiteboard?  
A Baker's Dozen Reasons!***

 by **Dr. Mary Ann Bell**


Presentation tools are increasing in popularity for educators who want to share ideas and information with large or small groups of students. Interactive applications are in demand for educators who want to involve their students in learning with technology. The electronic interactive whiteboard is a device that combines both of these attributes, offering shared learning experiences for large or small groups, as well as for distance learning. I became interested in the boards for use in junior high class and library instruction, to the degree that my doctoral research involved interactive use of the board in 8<sup>th</sup> grade writing class. The study showed statistically significant improvement in student attitudes towards both using computers in instruction and towards writing instruction. I also conducted a survey of teachers who are whiteboard users, querying them about their opinions regarding board use. The survey results indicated a high degree of satisfaction from educational leaders ranging from early elementary to academic settings.

First of all, what is an interactive electronic whiteboard? It is a presentation device that interfaces with a computer. The computer images are displayed on the board by a digital projector, where they can be seen and manipulated. Users can control software both from the computer and from the board. Participants can add notations, and emphasize by using a pen and or highlighter tool. By using his finger as a mouse, the teacher or student can run applications directly from the board. Another user at the computer can also have input. Any notes or drawings can then be saved or printed out and distributed to group members.

Why do I like interactive whiteboards so much? The following is a baker's dozen reasons for my enthusiasm.

1. The interactive electronic whiteboard is great for demonstrations. In the survey, many technology teachers and specialists reported enthusiasm for the board in staff development or computer class to show students how to use a particular application. Because the presenter can run the application from the board, using his finger like a mouse, it is easy to show the important features of particular software. The ability to mark on the board by writing with the stylus or using one's finger makes it possible to point out important features of the program.
2. The interactive electronic whiteboard is a colorful tool. Research indicates that students respond to displays where color is employed, and marking can be customized both in the pen and in the highlighter features to display a number of different colors. Width of lines can also be adjusted to add flexible marking choices.

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#### About Dr. Mary Ann Bell...

Mary Ann Bell is an Assistant Professor of Library Science at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She received her B.A. in English and Secondary Education from Baylor University, Waco, Texas, going on to teach reading and English for ten years, with experience in all middle school and high school grades. In 1985 she earned an MLS from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas and went on to serve for fifteen years as a middle school librarian. She continued her education by returning to Baylor University and earning an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a cognate area in Technology in 2000.

3. The board can accommodate different learning styles. Tactile learners can benefit from touching and marking at the board, audio learners can have the class discussion, visual learners can see what is taking place as it develops at the board.
4. All ages of students respond favorably to board use. Interactive whiteboards were originally used in the business world for group meetings. As they have gained popularity in schools, teachers have reported success with the youngest learners through students in academic settings. My present use of the board for demonstrations with graduate library science students has been as satisfying as my previous use with junior high learners.
5. Distance learning is an excellent setting for interactive whiteboard use. Since they can be connected for distance communication, they have value to users at more than one site concurrently.
6. One-computer classrooms can maximize the use of limited computer access by using the whiteboard. Students can work together with individuals contributing at the board, other participants at the computer, and the group as a whole discussing the activity. While it is true that acquiring the board and the projector is an expense, the use of this set-up can be viewed as a cost-cutter when it makes it possible for one computer to serve multiple students.
7. The interactive whiteboard is an excellent tool for the constructivist educator. Author David Johassen coined the word "mindtool" to describe devices or applications which encourage use of technology to encourage critical thinking in students. Attributes of mindtools include ease of use, group interaction, ready availability of software to be used. Since the boards can be used with any software, they are extremely adaptable for numerous uses and do not require acquisition of additional software. Their creative use is limited only by the imaginations of teachers and students.
8. The boards are clean and attractive tools. There is no messy chalk dust or other by-product, which can limit use. While the board can be used with regular dry erase markers, it is more likely to be used with the electronic marking feature, which employs either stylus or finger, and thus requires no cleanup.
9. Students with limited motor skills can enjoy board use. Because of large format, it may be easier for students to run programs by tapping on the board rather than mouse clicking. Also, teachers with young students report success having them write on the board with their fingers rather than the stylus.
10. It is interactive. Users can be contributing directly by input both at the computer and at the board. The combination I liked best was for the teacher to be stationed at the computer, with students at the board and in the class offering suggestions and physically contributing ideas and actions. The interaction that transpires between the person at the computer, the users at the board, and the computer itself is a unique and very adaptable arrangement.
11. It can interface well with other peripherals. I have used the board to display images both from a document camera and a video camera. With the document camera, the presenter can show an object such as a specimen and then mark on the board to point out features or label parts. We used the board with videotape of a sports activity, with the coach marking on the

Mary Ann joined the faculty of Sam Houston State University in Fall 2000, and enjoys teaching students who are pursuing degrees in library science. She particularly enjoys working with students as they explore ways to enhance learning through the use of technology. She admits to enjoying new gadgets and developments, but stresses the importance of adopting them for use only if they are effective tools for teaching and learning. She also has an ongoing interest in information ethics and has presented at various conferences and training sessions on topics related to technology and ethics. She also serves as an adjunct reference librarian at Montgomery College in The Woodlands, Texas, and enjoys working with patrons in that setting. She welcomes questions from interested readers, and can be reached at [mbell@main.com](mailto:mbell@main.com) or [lis\\_mah@shsu.edu](mailto:lis_mah@shsu.edu).

display as it occurred to show when and where players should have completed certain actions. Scanned images can also be shown to great advantage on the board and then written text added.

12. The board is great for meetings are lessons where the participants need printed copies of the proceedings. At the end of a brainstorming activity, for example, copies of the resulting document can be printed and distributed, as well as be saved for future work.
13. It is a kid magnet! I have participated in district technology fairs, PTO meetings, and other gatherings where I demonstrated use of the interactive whiteboard. Kids of all ages are drawn to the board. Adults who are first attracted by the novelty find themselves suggesting ways they could see it used effectively. Children just want to use the board at every opportunity.

Is an interactive whiteboard more than a toy or gimmick? The answer is a resounding yes! With proper planning, preparation, and training, it is a powerful instructional tool, which can be adapted for use with a wide range of subjects and ages.

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#### Best Sellers

##### Learning with Technology: A Constructivist Perspective

by David H. Jonassen

\$34.00 from Amazon.com

[More information](#)



##### Computers as Mindtools for Schools: Engaging Critical Thinking

by David H. Jonassen

\$44.00 from Amazon.com

[More information](#)



##### Integrating Educational Technology into Teaching

by M. D. Roblyer

\$65.00 from Amazon.com

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##### Instructional Media and Technologies for Learning

by Robert Heinich

\$63.87 from Amazon.com

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