

BEYOND THE INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD

WITH MANY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES NOW PLANNING THEIR SECOND GENERATION TEACHING TECHNOLOGY, ALTERNATIVES TO THE WHITEBOARD AND PROJECTOR COMBINATION ARE OF INCREASING INTEREST

It is almost 20 years since the first interactive whiteboard was introduced into the teaching environment. Anybody who used one of those early boards would recognise the technology as largely unchanged. But with many schools and colleges now planning their second generation of teaching technology, alternatives to the whiteboard and projector combination are of increasing interest.

Cumbria's Children's Services department is one of the first authorities to evaluate a leading alternative to the traditional interactive whiteboard - large format LCD displays with integrated touch sensitivity. For its 2009 pilot study, Cumbria commissioned education technology specialists Accurate AV to supply 25 Sahara CleverLCD Touch interactive displays.

The technology of Sahara's CleverLCD Touch range shares a common base with the high definition (HD) flatscreen TVs found in the home, but there the similarity ends. The education version of the LCD screen is designed for long-term, continuous use, with a reinforced protective glass layer and touch sensitivity built-in. They can also be much bigger than the domestic equivalents, with largest size, 65 inches, matching the working area of standard interactive whiteboards.

While the interactive functions of the new LCD screens match and often exceed those of traditional interactive whiteboards,

there are clear advantages to Sahara's CleverLCD Touch that will immediately chime with teachers and their students. For example, the screen can be placed almost anywhere in the classroom. There is no projector to consider, and so the positioning options are far greater.

With flexible positioning, the screen can be placed to take advantage of lighting conditions in the classroom. The screen image is consistent and not so vulnerable to the flaring that occurs when, for example, the sun shines onto an interactive whiteboard. Because there is no projector to consider, there is no shadow cast over the CleverLCD Touch screen when the teacher is working at the display.

Sahara's CleverLCD Touch also compares favourably in health and safety assessments. The projector dazzle commonly experienced by teachers using traditional interactive whiteboards is no longer a problem. Likewise, there is no ceiling bracket or projector boom arm, common to the traditional

interactive whiteboard, to tempt students into demonstrating their gymnastic prowess.

Instead, Sahara's CleverLCD Touch range provides teachers and their students with an HD quality viewing experience for video and graphics, a highly accurate drawing and writing surface and a comprehensive set of interactive presentation tools. Teachers and students are able to work with content created in a whole class context at a personal or group level using one or smaller supplementary screens from the CleverLCD Touch range. The students' experience of viewing their work on a high quality, TV-like display is proving to be motivational.

The Cumbria experience with CleverLCD Touch has already proved a success. The authority is looking at ways of funding the technology for any school that wants one, whether they took part in the pilot study or not. The county is considering an exchange scheme. Schools wanting to upgrade their existing whiteboard and projector systems can sell their old kit to another school that might want it, with the proceeds making a contribution to the cost of upgrading to an interactive LCD solution - a future-proof investment that takes them beyond the whiteboard.



The CleverLCD Touch 65-inch interactive touchscreen provides a working surface equivalent to that of a whiteboard but with no shadow, projector dazzle or ambient light issues.



CleverLCD Touch interactive screens are available in a range of sizes. The smaller models in the range, like this 32-inch, are ideal for working with groups of students and individuals. The content generated on the large, whole-class CleverLCD Touch interactive screens can be used on the smaller models with exactly the same software

