



## Fernhill College

Put more life into learning

**Today's young people are 'media savvy', brought up on computer games, the Internet and television. What chance do teachers have in competing with technology such as this? SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards might just be the answer.**

"SMART Boards are so easy to use anyone can have a go. They're so simple you can learn the basics in an hour."

*Richard McFahn,  
Advances Skills Teacher for History,  
Fernhill College.*

"If children come to school after being bombarded with new media and they sit in a lesson in front of a teacher with a piece of chalk they are not going to be turned on to learning," says Richard McFahn, Advanced Skills Teacher for History in Hampshire and teacher at Fernhill Secondary School in Farnborough. He has found a way of bringing the past to life, with the help of SMART's Notebook™ software.

### Beginning with image

Richard will often start a lesson with an historical image projected onto a SMART Board. He can then encourage pupils to highlight a section of the picture using the special highlighter tool, or they can drag words across the screen to describe what they see in front of them. The touch sensitive display connects to the classroom computer and digital projector, and Richard can control computer applications directly from the display, write notes in digital ink and save work to share later.

"As an introduction to 1066 and the Norman invasion, I start with a picture of Edward the Confessor from the Bayeux Tapestry," he explains. "The technology allows me to reveal half the picture and ask the pupils to circle the person they think is Edward. Next to the image there is a list of words describing how he looks: old, weak, unhealthy and so on. They can touch the words and drag them onto the picture."

"When I reveal the full picture of Edward, I explain that by the time the tapestry was made Edward was neither old nor weak but dead! It was Edward's death that led to the fight over who should succeed him, culminating in the Norman invasion, so the visual image from the Bayeux Tapestry draws the class in to an exploration of the key issues surrounding 1066.

### Adapting and innovating

In addition to Notebook, proprietary software is available for subjects across the curriculum but Richard McFahn is an innovator who prefers to use material he has researched himself, from books, websites or moving images.

# TECHNOLOGY WITH PURPOSE

"I can project film footage from the Battle of the Somme onto the screen and show how First World War propaganda distorted the truth," he says. This reflects his passion for teaching the unique skills of history. The Somme involved appalling loss of life and heavy casualties on the first day of fighting.

Various texts are projected onto the interactive whiteboard, and pupils use a coloured pen to highlight the information that is correct, and another colour to mark distortions of the truth.

"As they need to understand the facts to see the inaccuracies, their attention is assured," Richard says.

He is currently working on another exciting project using clips from Sergei Eisenstein's film *October* which depict the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917. The famous Russian director used thousands of extras to portray a dramatic assault, but the reality was that Bolshevik insurgents walked into the palace virtually unchallenged. This would not have been seen as particularly heroic, so Eisenstein was commissioned by the government to produce the 1927 film commemorating and glorifying the revolution. Richard's intention is to use the scenes from *October* to illustrate how propaganda exaggerates or distorts historical events.

"Apart from one or two additions or minor adjustments I am ready to go. Preparation is the key and if it's done well it does save teachers' time in the long term," he explains. Dr Phil Wilkin, Head of Science at the Bennett Memorial School in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, agrees. "At its basic level the whiteboard is an electronic blackboard but there is so much more to it than that. You can call up proprietary pieces of software and you can annotate over the top. I can use a piece of software from Boardworks for example that shows an animal cell and I can

invite students up to the board to annotate over the top and put a circle around the nucleus."

Boardworks is an independent educational publisher based in Oxford producing content for interactive whiteboards and projectors. In the activity 'Whose Cell is it Anyway?', students are asked to match the cell to its description by dragging words across the screen. Animation is used to explain difficult concepts in a visual way.

Children can click on a plant cell and an image will be floated in from the right. Or they can look at a lung and see it move in the process of inhaling and exhaling.

"The Government wants to make science more relevant to the world around us and interactive whiteboards are a useful tool for bringing textbooks to life", says Phil, whose technology status school has invested heavily in interactive whiteboards.

## Preparation is key

Richard McFahn prepares his lessons in advance and saves images for future sessions rather than laboriously going through all the slides in PowerPoint. Planned lessons, complete with pictures, cartoons or photographs, are saved on the hard drive for the following year's key stage 3 and 4 pupils and so that other staff may be able to benefit from his work. Any computer application – Internet sites, CD-Roms and DVDs – can be used to provide archive material, eyewitness accounts and relevant texts.

While Richard advocates using whiteboards, other subject teachers need to feel comfortable about using the technology before they start using it in class. Investing time in training teachers and helping with lesson preparation will pay dividends.

"It's an exciting process. It has revolutionised the way I teach science - you can tell I'm a fan!"

*Dr Phil Wilkin,  
Head of Science,  
Bennett Memorial School,  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent,*