

Evaluating Total Cost of Ownership for SMART Board™ Interactive Whiteboards

White Paper

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SMART Technologies Inc.

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Introduction

Integrating interactive whiteboards into your school can be exciting. A great deal of independent research supports using interactive whiteboards in the classroom because of their positive impact on learning¹. They are also a cost-effective way to assimilate advanced educational technology into the curriculum. At a more basic level, they are easy to learn and fun to use for both teachers and students.

Whether you are considering purchasing a single SMART Board interactive whiteboard or equipping your whole school district, it is important to consider the matter of total cost of ownership (TCO).

School and district purchasing guidelines typically call for a relevant, detailed examination of both the short- and long-term costs associated with a purchase. However, TCO experts suggest that a common mistake made by buyers of educational technology is to overestimate the initial purchase price while underestimating administrative and other costs. In her 2001 report, "Investing in K-12 Technology Equipment: Strategies for State Policymakers," Dixie Griffin Good observes that "many district technology budgets only address the acquisition cost of hardware and software"².

The suggested retail price for a 72" (182.9-cm) SMART Board interactive whiteboard (SMART Board software included) is low: US\$1,399 with a grant from the SMARTer Kids™ Foundation (www.smarterkids.org). But if you are to follow Ms. Griffin Good's advice, you need to carefully consider all aspects of ownership.

A study by the Consortium for School Networking³ offers school administrators a budget checklist for TCO that includes the following:

- Retrofitting
- Professional development
- Software
- Technical support
- Replacement costs

SMART considered each of these elements in the design of SMART Board interactive whiteboards, so the resulting TCO is affordably low.

Evaluating TCO for SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards

Retrofitting and Additional Hardware

A SMART Board interactive whiteboard has no special installation requirements. It can be purchased with its own floor stand, requiring no modifications to school facilities, or it can be wall-mounted with a bracket included with the purchase. If direct sunlight enters the classroom and you have no window coverings, you may want to install them so the projected image remains clear and bright.

In addition to the interactive whiteboard, you need a computer, data projector and connection cables. If you want to access a local network or the Internet, you will also need an Internet connection.

A SMART Board interactive whiteboard can be used with your existing Macintosh or PC and any model of data projector. If you don't have a projector, one can be purchased for a reasonable price. For example, using an NEC Grant available to K-12 schools through the SMARTer Kids Foundation, you can purchase an NEC VT 465 for US\$999.

All necessary connection cables are included in the purchase price of a SMART Board interactive whiteboard. You also have the option of eliminating trailing cables by using a wireless connection. An optional wireless connection kit may be purchased with the SMART Board interactive whiteboard for approximately US\$400.

To use the interactive whiteboard, you can place the projector on a table or cart, or, if you prefer, mount the projector from the ceiling. A ceiling-mounted projector has the benefit of not being accidentally jostled out of alignment with the interactive whiteboard, but this represents an additional installation expense.

Professional Development

A strong professional development program is a key factor in the adoption of any new technology. To help you make the most of your new SMART Board interactive whiteboard, you can choose from any number of free or very affordable professional development options to meet your school's needs.

Option 1

The simplest option is to download free training materials from the SMART website (<http://www.smarttech.com/trainingcenter/freemat.asp>). SMART is committed to ensuring everyone at your school has access to the resources needed to start using your new SMART Board interactive whiteboard right away. You can also request free, editable copies of these training materials so they can be customized for your own school or district.

Option 2

Another easy option is to access a SMART Board software tutorial via the interactive whiteboard's on-screen Help menu. This training resource provides a quick tutorial for people who just want to learn the basics and an in-depth tutorial for those who want more advanced training.

Option 3

Another online option is to freely access information at *EDCompass* (www.edcompass.smarttech.com), SMART's online community for educators using SMART products. This website provides a wealth of free information, including

- Teacher-developed lesson activities
- Curriculum-specific software resources
- Research reports on interactive whiteboard use in the classroom
- Links to pedagogical Web resources and additional professional development options
- A list of how-to's, including a section on evaluating technologies for the classroom

Option 4

SMART also offers online, interactive orientation sessions. These are 20–30-minute computer and telephone conferences that offer a quick, no-cost overview of SMART Board interactive whiteboard basics. Each session is led by a SMART trainer who uses SMART products every day. You'll learn how to use your SMART Board interactive whiteboard more effectively and have an opportunity to ask questions.

Option 5

If you prefer on-site, instructor-led training, SMART offers half- or full-day on-site training sessions and a full-day on-site train-the-trainer session at a reasonable cost (<http://www.smarttech.com/trainingcenter/location.asp>). On-site training is often the best option for more widespread installations. Some authorized SMART resellers also offer on-site training. Check with your sales representative if you want to pursue this option.

Software

Every SMART Board interactive whiteboard purchase includes award-winning SMART Board software, the engine behind all of SMART's interactive whiteboards. SMART Board software is more than just a whiteboard application. With it, you can

- Control any computer application
- Write in digital ink over applications, Internet pages or even moving video
- Save all your work to a single file
- Transform handwriting to text
- Record synchronized audio and data files
- Access a clip-art gallery of more than 5,000 images
- Access a collection of more than 400 templates

Your purchase comes with unlimited access to free SMART Board software upgrades for any of your school's computers, which adds value to your purchase over time as new features are added to the software.

Also, included with your purchase is free educational software optimized for SMART Board interactive whiteboard use:

- SMART Ideas™ concept-mapping software
- SMART Speller software
- Finale® NotePad™ music notation software

It is also important to note that any SMART Board interactive whiteboard user can freely download SMART Board software to any computer, so the interactive whiteboard does not require a dedicated computer. SMART Board software can be downloaded from the Support section of SMART's website (<http://www.smarttech.com/support/software/index.asp>).

Technical Support

Another TCO consideration is whether, and to what extent, technical support is offered free of cost by the dealer or manufacturer. You'll want to know how long the warranty is valid and what it covers. SMART Board interactive whiteboards come with free technical support by telephone or e-mail, and a five-year warranty upon registration.

TCO analyses should also consider the reliability of the manufacturer and dealer. Is the company credible? Does it provide the best quality, the best support, the best training and the best resources? In the case of SMART, every SMART Board interactive whiteboard is backed by guarantees of quality and support from the company that sells more interactive whiteboards than all other interactive whiteboard manufacturers combined. SMART invented interactive whiteboards, it continues to lead the way in developing large-screen touch technologies and it is passionately committed to creating high-quality products for educators. SMART also strives to build relationships with the best audio-visual dealers in the world, ones who are focused on providing exceptional service to you and your school.

Replacement Costs and Durability

Consider also any costs associated with damage to the whiteboards and their accessories, as well as replacement costs of pens, bulbs and batteries. While some interactive whiteboards require special styluses, SMART's interactive whiteboard pens contain no proprietary technology and do not use batteries. If the pens are lost, your SMART Board interactive whiteboard still works.

The surface of SMART Board interactive whiteboards is made of extremely durable material (a hardcoat polyester) and is easily cleaned with standard window cleaner. The surface resists

scratches, abrasion and chemicals, and no SMART Board interactive whiteboard surface has needed replacing due to normal K–12 classroom wear and tear.

Projector bulbs do need replacing from time to time. Most projectors come with a two-year warranty and a bulb that should be replaced after 3,000 hours of use. To estimate how long your projector bulb will last, do a simple calculation. For example, if you use the projector 20 hours a week for approximately 40 weeks of the year, you get 800 hours of use per year, and the bulb lasts for just over three years. One bulb can typically be replaced for approximately US\$400.

Evaluating TCO for SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards At a Glance

TCO Factor	Considerations	SMART Board interactive whiteboard facts
Retrofitting and Additional Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation • Projectors • Computers • Cables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place on a floor stand with no facility modifications, or mount on a wall with a single bracket (included). • Use your own projector, or purchase an inexpensive option with a grant from the SMARTer Kids Foundation (www.smarterkids.org). • Use your existing Macintosh or PC. • Connect easily with connection cables included, or purchase an optional wireless kit for US\$400. • Place your projector on a table or cart, or mount it from the ceiling.
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of use • Free training • On-site training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the basics in under five minutes; access free training resources for advanced training. • Access free training materials on the SMART website (www.smarttech.com/trainingcenter). • Access a SMART Board software tutorial via the interactive whiteboard's on-screen Help menu. • Access <i>EDCompass</i> (www.edcompass.com), the online community for teachers using SMART products, for more than 500 free lesson activities and other resources. • Sign up for free online, interactive orientation sessions led by a SMART trainer. • Purchase reasonably priced instructor-led sessions available at your location. • Inquire about on-site training via your sales representative.
Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional software • Upgrades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the most intuitive, powerful interactive whiteboard software on the market, free for SMART Board interactive whiteboard users. • Access free software upgrades for life; this applies to anyone at your school using SMART Board interactive whiteboards.

Technical Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost • Availability • Quality of support • Warranty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access free technical support via phone or e-mail. • Rely on the world leader in interactive whiteboards for top-quality support. • Full five-year warranty upon registration.
Replacement Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durability • Replacement Parts • Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The low-maintenance screen is made of highly durable material that does not wear out with normal classroom use. • Easily and inexpensively replace lost pen tray tools; if pen tray tools are lost the interactive whiteboard is still fully functional. • No special maintenance required.

SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards Mean Low TCO

SMART's many free services and resources, including professional development, software upgrades and technical support, eliminate many ownership costs, making total cost of ownership very affordable. Moreover, the SMART Board interactive whiteboard has such an intuitive interface that you can learn the basics in under five minutes.

There's a reason K-12 educators have made the SMART Board interactive whiteboard the most widely purchased and widely standardized interactive whiteboard in the world: it is simply the best quality, the easiest to use and the best value for both the short and long term.

¹ See the Research Reports link at <http://edcompass.smarttech.com/> for a comprehensive list of research on interactive whiteboard use in the classroom.

² Dixie Griffin Good, "Investing in K-12 Technology Equipment: Strategies for State Policymakers" (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2001), 25.

³ Sara Fitzgerald, "Taking TCO to the Classroom: A School Administrator's Guide to Planning for the Total Cost of New Technology" (Washington, DC: Consortium for School Networking, 2001).