White Paper

Evaluating Total Cost of Ownership for SMART Board™ Interactive Whiteboards

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SMART Technologies Inc.

SMART™ Technologies

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Introduction

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

The purchasing guidelines of schools and school districts typically call for a relevant, detailed examination of both the short- and long-term costs associated with a major purchase. Whether you are considering purchasing a single SMART Board interactive whiteboard or equipping your whole school district, it is important to consider the total cost of ownership (TCO).

An affordable purchase price for new technology is an important factor in maintaining a low TCO. The suggested retail price for a 77" (195.6 cm) front-projection SMART Board interactive whiteboard (SMART Board software included) is low: qualifying institutions in North America can purchase one for US$1,399 with a grant from the SMARTer Kids™ Foundation of Canada. (For more information, visit **www.smarterkids.org**.)

However, a low purchase price is only a start. TCO experts suggest that many buyers of education technology overestimate the initial purchase price but underestimate 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."[1]

A study by the Consortium for School Networking [2] offers school administrators a budget checklist for TCO that includes the following:

- Retrofitting and additional hardware
- Professional development
- Software
- Technical support
- Replacement costs and durability

SMART Technologies Inc. considers all of these elements when designing SMART Board interactive whiteboards; therefore, the resulting TCO is low.

Evaluating TCO for SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards

Retrofitting and Additional Hardware

Installing technology equipment can cost money, especially if you need to retrofit your building to accommodate your new purchase. Products with minimal installation costs can help you maintain a low TCO.

A front-projection 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.

To operate the interactive whiteboard, you will need a computer, a projector and Internet access if required.

A SMART Board interactive whiteboard can be used with your existing Mac or PC and any model of digital projector. Schools that don't have a projector can purchase one for a reasonable price, with basic models available for less than US$1,000.

Connection cables are included in the purchase price of a SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Alternatively, you can eliminate trailing cables by purchasing a wireless module that connects your SMART Board interactive whiteboard to your computer (suggested list price US$1,000).

To use the interactive whiteboard, you can either place the projector on a table or cart, or mount the projector from the ceiling. While a mounted projector will not be accidentally jostled out of alignment with the interactive whiteboard, it does have an additional installation cost.

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

2. 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).

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 a 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 (**www.smarttech.com/trainingcenter**). SMART is committed to ensuring that everyone at your school has access to the resources needed to start using your new SMART Board interactive whiteboard right away. Available training materials include Quick Reference Guides, Hands-On Practice exercises and Two-Minute Tutorials.

Option 2

Another easy option is to access a SMART Board software tutorial using 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 free online option is to access information through SMART's education solutions website (**www.education.smarttech.com**). This website provides a wealth of resources, including the following:

- Teacher-developed lesson activities
- Lesson activities correlated to curriculum standards
- Curriculum-specific software resources
- Professional development programs
- Research reports on interactive-whiteboard use in the classroom
- Links to pedagogical Web resources and additional profesional-development options

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. (For more information, visit **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

Software is an important consideration in your TCO analysis. While most technology products come with free operating software, not all companies offer free upgrades to keep your equipment current.

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, Web pages or even moving video
- Save all your work to a single Notebook file
- Convert handwriting to text
- Record synchronized audio and data files
- Access a Gallery of more than 6,000 images, videos, sounds, Macromedia® Flash® movies and backgrounds

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.

Educators can download a free, take-home version of SMART Board software. This version can be used by multiple staff members, giving them the freedom to create lesson plans and activities outside of the classroom.

Because the software can be downloaded to any computer, the SMART Board interactive whiteboard does not require a dedicated computer. SMART Board software can be downloaded from the Support section of SMART's website (**www.smarttech.com/support/software/index.asp**).

A suite of education software, optimized for SMART Board interactive whiteboard use, is included at no additional charge:

- SMART Ideas® concept-mapping software
- Number Cruncher software
- SMART Speller software
- Finale NotePad® music notation software
- BrainPOP® Flash movies

Technical Support

Another TCO consideration is whether, and to what extent, technical support is offered free of charge by the dealer or manufacturer. The duration and scope of the warranty are often concerns. 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 and the best support? 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 audiovisual dealers in the world – those who are focused on providing exceptional service to you and your school.

Replacement Costs and Durability

You should also consider any costs associated with wear and damage to the whiteboards and their accessories, including the replacement of pens, bulbs and batteries. While some interactive whiteboards require special pens, 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 a hard-coated polyester, which is tear proof and extremely durable, and is easily cleaned with standard whiteboard cleaner. The surface resists scratches, abrasion and chemicals. To date, no SMART Board interactive whiteboard surface has needed replacing as a result of normal K–12 classroom use.

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 will last for just over three years. One bulb can typically be replaced for approximately US$400.

SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards Mean Low TCO

SMART's multiple 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 is so easy to use that you can learn the basics in under five minutes.

K–12 educators have made the SMART Board interactive whiteboard the most widely purchased and widely standardized interactive whiteboard in the world because it offers the best quality, ease of use and value for both the short and long term.

Evaluating TCO for SMART Board Interactive Whiteboards at a Glance

TCO factor	Considerations	Keep costs low with a SMART Board interactive whiteboard
Retrofitting and additional hardware	• Installation • Projectors • Computers • Cables	• Place your interactive whiteboard on a floor stand with no facility modifications, or mount it on a wall with a single bracket (included). Place your projector on a table or cart, or mount it from the ceiling. • Use your own projector, or purchase an affordable model with a grant from the SMARTer Kids Foundation (**www.smarterkids.org**) • Use your existing Mac or PC • Use the included USB cables to connect the interactive whiteboard to your computer, or purchase a wireless module for US$199
Professional development	• Ease of use • Free training • On-site training	• Learn the basics in under five minutes; access free training resources for advanced training on the SMART website (**www.smarttech.com/trainingcenter**) • Take advantage of SMART's other free training options: ◦ Access a SMART Board software tutorial using the interactive whiteboard's on-screen Help menu ◦ Access SMART's education solutions website (**www.education.smarttech.com**) for more than 2,500 free lesson activities (including lesson activities that are correlated to U.S., Canada and UK curriculum standards) 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. Ask your sales representative about on-site training.
Software	• Additional software • Upgrades	• Use the most intuitive, powerful interactive whiteboard software on the market, included at no additional charge for SMART Board interactive whiteboard users • Access free software upgrades for life – available to anyone at your school using SMART Board interactive whiteboards
Technical support	• Cost and availability • Quality of support • Warranty	• Access free technical support by phone or e-mail • Rely on the global leader in interactive whiteboards for top-quality support • Receive a full five-year warranty upon registration
Replacement costs and durability	• Durability • Replacement parts • Maintenance	• Use your interactive whiteboard with confidence. The low-maintenance surface is made of highly durable material that does not wear out from normal classroom use • Keep replacement costs low. If pen-tray tools are lost, the interactive whiteboard is still fully functional, and the pens are easily replaced at a reasonable cost • Maintain your interactive whiteboard easily. No special maintenance is required