

TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

Classroom Technology

By Kristin Beasley of Beasley Technology

The economic stimulus package has been big news lately. The funds will be making a difference in your corner of the world very soon. One major beneficiary of the stimulus funds is your local public school. Many schools are choosing to use part of the funds to purchase new technology for their classrooms. Even without stimulus funds, schools are pushing to get the latest technology in the hands of their students and teachers. So what can your child (or grandchild, or neighbor's child) expect to see when summer break is over?

One major trend in today's classrooms is the interactive whiteboard. Several companies offer this option, including SMART Technologies, Panasonic, Promethean, and Mimeo. These boards allow teachers to manipulate their computers from the whiteboard. They (or their students) can digitally "mark" on documents, run PowerPoint presentations, or access the Internet, all from the front of the classroom and in full view of every student. In addition, many new textbooks arrive complete with lessons designed for use on the interactive whiteboard. These boards also come with software designed to help teachers create interactive lessons using the boards.

Students can touch the board to reveal the answer to a question; roll digital dice or flip digital coins; and even dissect a frog onscreen. The possibilities with these boards are limitless.

Another technological development popping up in the classroom is the classroom response system. These systems are designed to work in tandem with the interactive whiteboard. Using a classroom response

system, a teacher can give a quiz from the whiteboard; each student in the classroom has a "clicker" with which they can respond to the quiz questions. The system allows immediate feedback for the teacher so that he or she can identify areas that need to be reviewed or re-taught, while maintaining privacy for the student. Using this system in conjunction with an interactive whiteboard lesson, a teacher can create an interactive lesson from start to finish. The days of students sitting quietly through a lecture are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

One final item that may be coming to a classroom near you is the classroom audio system. These systems consist of a teacher microphone, a student microphone, and speakers (usually installed in the ceiling) that are placed strategically to deliver the best possible sound quality to each student in the classroom. Studies have shown that students who fall behind are often having difficulty hearing the lesson. Classrooms are full of ambient noise—air conditioners, paper rustling, other students whispering, etc. Using the microphone allows a teacher to overcome the ambient noise without straining his or her voice. The student microphone allows classroom discussion to take place at a level every student can hear.

Interactive whiteboards, classroom response systems, and classroom audio systems are just a few of the ways in which schools are using technology to create the best possible learning environment for your students. Beasley Technology is proud to play a role in creating premier classrooms in our area schools. Be sure to tell your student to look for these and other improvements to their classrooms—maybe they'll even get excited about going back to school this fall!

