A dynamic music class is just the beginning

Are interactive whiteboards becoming a thing of the past? Anna Forsyth looks at how Wanganui Collegiate is embracing the latest in projector technology.

Wanganui Collegiate School is among the first to try the latest in interactive technology – but there's not an IWB in sight. They're early adaptors of Epson's ultra-short throw interactive projector, the EB-455Wi, which has all the techno wizardry in the device and can project onto any surface (from as little as 24cm away).

The school's IT Manager, Glen Morgan, could see that less is more when it comes to teaching and made the decision to install the interactive projectors, based on their price point and the simplicity of the technology, particularly for their use in the music department.

"From the perspective of training, the product is intuitive and requires little effort in familiarisation," he said.

The unobtrusive projector sits in Nicholas Grigsby's music class, just above the normal whiteboard. He incorporates YouTube clips of Mozart's Magic Flute into a junior lesson seamlessly, with no glare or shadow (courtesy of how close the projector is positioned to the board). In this sense, it acts like a normal data projector, offering whatever is shown on the connected device – incidentally, Epson projectors are operating system agnostic, so can be used with any device. Grigsby uses his regular PC laptop to connect to the projector.

Students are engaging more than ever

Is this still chalk and talk, but just re-packaged? In this instance, yes, until Nicholas gets his students to come up to write examples on the built-in music paper view or has them present to the class, with the ability to save multimedia slideshows for viewing later. Content is never lost, unlike the lesson that got rubbed away on the whiteboard the day before. There is the ability to interact with the surface, using the special infrared pens provided. The quality of sound for a music class is "fantastic", according to Grigsby, due to the built-in speakers, so they've done away with bad sound from a laptop and students are engaging more than ever.

"Music teaching has specific needs for ICT," he explained. "We can write notation with ease, and without obscuring the space being used, and then move immediately to interactive music theory programmes, and also call up a YouTube video. It is a real multi-platform/multi-media classroom experience."

Any software can be accommodated

If schools want all the whizz bang of the IWBs they can have it, too, as any software you can run on your device will easily be accommodated. Many schools already use data projectors of some description and there is an arm attachment available for a fraction of the cost of a new projector, which adds the interactive element to an existing machine. In Wanganui's Collegiate's case they have invested in new data projectors and found the installation by VideoPro was not complicated.

"From a technical perspective we were pleasantly surprised with the ease of install," said Grigsby.

As the music class becomes more familiar with using interaction within lessons, the school plans to utilise the technology more widely throughout.

"We have found that environments based around interactive forms of technology tend be respected more," added Morgan. "In addition, with the growing number of web-based interactive learning activities, teachers who embrace the technology are more empowered in their teaching."

As for Grigsby, he couldn't be happier: "This is the best thing that my department has bought in around eight years! It has transformed all of our thinking – students and staff – about the future accessibility of our dynamic subject." ▲

ANNA FORSYTH WRITES FOR *INTERFACE* MAGAZINE.

ONE SCHOOL IN 2010

Wanganui Collegiate School made history at the beginning of 2010 when Collegiate and St George's schools became a single entity as an independent, Anglican, co-educational Year 1-13 boarding and day school.

collegiate.school.nz

EB-455Wi

When it was launched in May 2010, Epson's EB-455Wi was the world's first interactive ultra-short throw projector.

epson.co.nz and **videopro.co.nz**