Projection in action

Wellington's Queen Margaret College has implemented several interactive technologies over the past few years. However, it's the latest acquisition that has added a truly new dimension to the classroom, writes Lee Suckling.

When he started looking, Richard Knuckey thought he was in the market for just another short-throw projector. Little did he know his search would reveal some remarkable capabilities in the latest product from Epson.

"We've used interactive whiteboards before but I personally had no idea projectors could be interactive," said Knuckey, the school's Head of E-learning. "We were initially just after some new, high-quality short-throw projectors and found that the Epson EB-485Wi offered exactly what we wanted but with the added bonus of interactivity. A key feature was the ultra-short throw projection, which means the unit can be firmly mounted close to the wall, resulting in no image vibration."

The school had a brand new, state-of-the-art gymnasium and classroom block built last year, called the Hobson Complex, and fitted the Epson projectors to each of its five language classrooms.
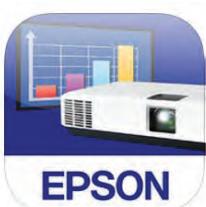
In these lessons, each interactive projector is used to add variety to teaching and learning practices.

Increasing student engagement

"We use the Epson projector with the software Task Magic," said French teacher Paula Turner. "It's an excellent tool for learning vocabulary. The word drops down and the student in front of the board has to match it to a selection of words. The whole class gets very competitive and really engaged."

Interactive PowerPoints allow Turner to move paragraphs, match up vocabulary, and interact with everything projected onto the classroom wall.

"This allows for students to be involved in the process as we go, at their pace, and also means that it's not static," she added.

While Epson's interactive projectors are primarily used by Queen Margaret College's languages department, the school is looking to install them throughout the rest of the school because of the added scope to learning and teaching offered by the technology.

Annotation is a key feature with the Epson EB-485Wi, "though I'm still coming to grips with the text recognition technology", admitted Knuckey. With the interactive pen, both students and teachers can write on top of PDFs and images; adding to the learning experience.

"Overall, the interactive technology has resulted in a notable increase in student engagement," said Knuckey.

WATCH AND WRITE: BOTH PENS IN USE

Smooth and fast pen response

Student engagement can be further enhanced as two interactive pens can be used at the same time onto the projected images. The pens can interact simultaneously and independently from each other.

"The Epson interactive projectors start up in a near instant. Rather than waiting for a PC to boot, a teacher or student can simply turn on the unit, grab a pen, and start writing on top of their projected content. Auto-calibration is one-touch upon set up, and smooth and fast pen responses are ensured from there onwards."

Brightness in the classroom isn't an issue, either. The Epson machines use 3LCD technology, which produces equal amounts of both colour and white light output; 3100 lumens are incorporated in the EB-485Wi (a 2600-lumen option, the EB-475Wi, is also available). This allows for use in full daylight with no need to dim lights or draw curtains.

Teachers needed little professional development on getting started with the Epson EB-485Wi, either.

"We just got together, had a play around, and shared what we each discovered," explained Knuckey. "It's reasonably easy out of the box, and installation was quite straight forward."

The projectors also offer iPad and iPod integration, which allow anyone to present wirelessly from the devices using the Epson iProjection app.

Aside from learning his way around the EB-485Wi's text recognition functionality, harnessing use of the unit's Wi-Fi has posed the only other challenge to Knuckey and other users at Queen Margaret College thus far. The plan is to explore these features over the course of the year. ➣

LEE SUCKLING WRITES FOR *INTERFACE* MAGAZINE.

MORE ON THE EB-485WI

This is an ultra-short-throw projector that can turn any surface – even a table top – into a large, widescreen, interactive display. It offers simultaneous, dual pen functionality, self-calibration, and advanced networking capability that enables users to monitor, control and present from a remote location.

For more information go to **epson.co.nz**

Epson iProjection is mobile projection app that lets you wirelessly project images and files stored on your iOS or Android computer using an Epson projector with network availability.

epson.co.nz/iprojection/

WHO WON THE EPSON VISUALISER? FIND OUT ON PAGE 9