

James Harris,
Assistant Principal
Wodonga
Primary School



A little about us...

Wodonga Primary School is located in North East Victoria, three and a half hours from Melbourne on the border of New South Wales. With a substantial increase in enrolment over the past few years, it currently has 887 students ranging from five to eleven years old. The school's ethos is to provide a stimulating and engaging culture, something that it has harnessed through the whole-school use of interactive technology.

With a learning focus on five discovery concepts, including 'discovering our world, our future', the school's investment in 42 Promethean ActivPanels over the past year marks a commitment to using interactive technology to encourage wider collaboration within the immediate school community, the local area and the world beyond.

Key considerations...

As a technology-forward school and a professional learning centre, teachers foster an environment whereby children are encouraged to engage in activity through collaboration. Having used Promethean interactive whiteboards for several years, the school has made significant investment into its team through personal development and training on the accompanying software, ActivInspire, which has become a central tool for supporting lesson delivery.

As the existing interactive whiteboards had started to age and not perform effectively, the school started to investigate options to upgrade the hardware – recognizing that any solution would need to provide a seamless transition to incorporate both the training and resources that it had previously invested in ActivInspire.

Assistant Principal, James Harris, explained: "It was very much the software driving our decision about which hardware would be most suitable. We evaluated the options available in the market as we wanted to make sure that with an upgrade, there would be consistency for continuing with our use of ActivInspire."

He added: "As with most schools, there are two main challenges when it comes to using technology - we want to keep up to date with the latest innovations and secondly, we want to ensure that our staff have the confidence to make the most of the potential such technology brings.

"We want all of our teachers to not only use technology as another resource in their toolkit, but also empower them to teach to their strengths."

The school's ethos which is embedded in the curriculum and explored through its 'Discovery' concept aims to ignite the curiosity of students, leading them to engage in learning and inspire a quest for information and ideas. It also provides opportunities for students to understand what they are learning, the value of why and then be able to connect and link back to themselves and their community.

An investment of this scale by the school needed to ensure that from a teaching perspective, teachers were working smarter and sharing best practice more effectively, whilst providing a future-proofed, long-term solution.

Why the ActivPanel...

The decision to procure the 42 ActivPanels was the natural next step to ensure consistency with the school's prior investment in the use of ActivInspire, as its benefits had been embedded within the teaching culture. The school was also extremely impressed with the capabilities of the Promethean technology compared to the other interactive panels it had researched. By providing a wider functionality than just its compatibility with ActivInspire, the ActivPanels became the final piece of the puzzle.

The compatibility of GoogleDocs, which is used as the main online collaborative tool across the school, also proved to be an advantage in maintaining the link with the Promethean brand.

The benefit of having an external upgradeable android device, set the ActivPanel apart from other interactive panels, freeing up each teacher's own device and enabling collaboration, particularly with the use of Google Drive. As well as helping the teachers to explore, critique and collaborate by sharing content, rather than having five different lessons planned across the same topic, it has also ensured that content could be easily transferred to different devices, mirroring activity and providing each class with the opportunity to share and give live interactive feedback. All of these features ultimately helped to make lessons more timely and supported opportunities for 'learning in the moment'. This has really redefined the teaching style at the school, for example teachers can take a picture on their device, display it on the ActivPanel and then share with the class for open discussion and editing. Previously, this exercise would have taken more time, with photocopying and other administrative processes involved.

About its long term benefits, James said: "The ActivPanel's external upgradeable android device means that we are really future-proofing our investment. As well as the immediate benefit of having each teacher's device available whilst using the panel, we know that we can upgrade the computer system without having to purchase

a whole new screen, should we need to. This was certainly a factor in our decision."

The ActivPanels have proven a big hit with the children who love the immediate feedback from the interactivity and the international communication that tools such as video conferencing bring. The school is now using the new technology beyond the capabilities of ActivInspire, as it has introduced a whole new world of opportunities. For example, a Year Six class benefitted from speaking in real time to a park ranger in Yellowstone Park, in the US, where they were able to ask specific and researched questions on the topic of adaptations.

To ensure minimum disruption to the school community, the installations took place over school holidays, with the appointed Promethean partners managing the technical delivery and Promethean providing training for staff on best practice and use.

Note: The supply and install of this project was managed by Zeal Group and PDI Antennas.



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