

# Research Studies – Learning from Others

by Nancy Knowlton

A number of years ago when I was visiting a European country, someone asked me about the benefits of using interactive whiteboards. I faithfully recounted the findings of various research studies while the questioner listened attentively. At the end, she waved her hand dismissively and said, “Yes, but we will have to learn this for ourselves and do our own research.” I commented about what a shame that was because the research of others could speed the adoption of interactive whiteboards in her country’s schools.

Many teachers and administrators ask about the research that exists on the use of interactive whiteboards in the classroom. People want to know what impacts are documented in research studies and how that research might be applicable within their own environment. With limited funds, accountability at an all-time high and a focus on individual student achievement, it is no wonder that technology product buyers are putting more emphasis on research when they make their purchasing decisions.



## Supporting Research Since 1997

We have actively supported independent research into interactive whiteboards for about twelve years. Most of that support has involved providing our products for the duration of the research project. In return, the researchers give SMART permission to publish and share their findings. Never have we directed or intervened in the research that has been undertaken by teachers, teachers-in-training and professors.

SMART’s support has resulted in a considerable body of research that is freely available to our customers, prospects and other interested parties. Much of the early research came from a few countries – the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada. Not coincidentally, these countries were early adopters, interested in looking more deeply at the positive effects of using a new technology product.

## The Findings

We have reported on the findings of these research studies, namely:

- Improved engagement
- Improved motivation and attendance
- Support for multiple learning styles and special needs students
- Improved review and retention
- Improved teacher productivity

## Localized Research

Increasingly, people request local research data. They understand that research has been undertaken elsewhere, but they want to see how the use of interactive whiteboards affects the performance of schools and students in their local areas. Is local research the only way to validate the value in a new product? What can be learned from research undertaken in other locales, and how can it be used?

## An Information Balancing Act

When making decisions about interactive whiteboard purchases and implementations, teachers and administrators may find it helpful to balance information from different sources. Validated, unbiased, independent research coupled with an insider’s understanding of local differences can provide decision makers with information tailored to the needs of their region.

## Proof of Concept

On occasion, there isn’t time for research to be undertaken. A viable alternative could be an intense proof of concept – a pilot project in which a school or district outfits a few classrooms with interactive whiteboards in order to prove the benefits they expect to receive from the adoption. It’s a living lab of real-time experiences that give people the information that they need to make a fact-based decision to adopt.

## Learning Quickly

In education, as in the corporate world, there is an irrefutable need to learn quickly and learn a lot. Trusting existing research on interactive whiteboards can speed up learning and hasten the technology adoption process.

At SMART, we encourage educators everywhere to look at the findings from the various existing research studies and apply them in their local context. Students today don’t have time for everything to be researched locally. They have one chance for a great education.

Nancy Knowlton is the co-founder and CEO of SMART Technologies, the world’s leading supplier of interactive whiteboards. Nancy’s husband and SMART co-founder, David Martin, is the inventor of the interactive whiteboard product category. Together they have built a company that is focused on delivering easy-to-use, yet feature-rich collaboration tools, including the SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Nancy can be reached at [CEO@smarttech.com](mailto:CEO@smarttech.com).