



Description: Enhancing Learning at a Leading American Academy

no.005

Location: The Hill School, PA



Rick Bauer, CIO at the Hill School, demonstrates a point to his network engineering students in a recent class, while the mimio Interactive system captures his whiteboard notes.

Best-in-Class Technology for a Best-in-Class School

For the Hill School's chief information officer, Rick Bauer, the advent of the digital age at his school meant that traditional chalkboard and chalk would give way to whiteboards and projectors. Little did he realize, however, just how big the demand for digital projection and display technology would become, and how much the already thin resources would be stretched to provide those resources for his teachers and their students. That's where mimio® technology came in.

Goals and Challenges

Rick directs technology initiatives at the Hill School, a 150-year-old independent boarding school in western Philadelphia. The school's progress in deploying digital teaching and learning tools, as well as the educational philosophies that drive their use, have made the school one of America's leaders in academic technology use. The 65 buildings on campus are completely digital, delivering high-bandwidth connections to every student dorm room, classroom, and public meeting area. Every student and faculty member owns a powerful notebook computer, ensuring universal access to information, communication, and other network-based resources. The school is already a reference site for 30 leading technology companies in the nation, and is an impressive example of what can happen when technology supports learning. Each year, hundreds of teachers, school administrators, and civic leaders flock to the school, which also offers summer training workshops for faculty and school network administrators.

The use of technology in the classroom meant that other equipment supporting the learning environment had to get smarter, too. "I took a look at our chalkboards – messy, always needing cleaning – and the case for whiteboards made itself," Rick says. "While we were migrating, however, the needs of the teachers challenged us further: Why limit our boards to simply being passive recorders of information? What if we could find a way to make them smarter, to have them record a teacher's work – a math calculation, the diagram of a sentence? And in an environment where every student could connect to that information, why did the students still have to laboriously re-copy every detail from those boards? Clearly there had to be a better way."



Description: Enhancing Learning at a Leading American Academy

no. 005

Location: The Hill School, PA



Summer school students and network technicians use the mimio Interactive system to post daily work tasks and to communicate with tech support stations located around Hill's campus. A daily work log is kept and updated each day.

Meeting the Challenge

Many of the "smart" solutions the school had invested in weren't helping matters at all. "We had digital tools that were impeded by our display limitations, and we were forcing faculty to change the way they normally presented materials in class. And that's not what we were all about," Rick says. "If I have to ask a teacher to turn upside down every learning and teaching concept he or she holds dear simply because the technology tool forces that change, I'm not sure that's a fight I want to have—or should. Why not simply find better tools?"

Installing expensive electronic digital whiteboards wasn't called for either. "I took a look at the real complex, expensive boards and thought it was overkill. We had whiteboards; couldn't we just find a device that was portable, that moved with a teacher or a class, and that didn't take the proverbial rocket scientist to learn to use?"

Five mimeo Interactive systems were recently installed around the campus, and the results have been impressive. A new class of collaboration tool, the mimio Interactive system can capture handwritten text and drawings in color and save them to a Mac or PC for sharing over the Internet. The mimio Interactive Xi Bar is portable hardware that attaches to any standard whiteboard with suction cups, connects quickly to a computer, and uses infrared and ultrasound technology to track the position of a special marker stylus on the board.

Using a mimio Interactive system with mimio boardCast software, Hill School faculty can capture live lectures, complete with audio and full-color whiteboard notes, diagrams, and drawings. Students can view the lecture live or at a later time, via the Internet or through Hill's Intranet-based online learning portal.

Outcome

The Hill School has found a better tool in the mimio Interactive system, and it's having a wonderful impact in English, Mathematics, Science, Technology, and even Physical Education classes.

"The applications are wonderful," says Tom Gizzi, science instructor and head football coach. "I can have my students focus on understanding the diagram, not simply copy it down. They feel safe that there will always be a copy of my



Each computer lab at Hill is equipped with a mimio Interactive system, allowing students to easily get copies of all materials posted on lab whiteboards.



Description: Enhancing Learning at a Leading American Academy

no.005

Location: The Hill School, PA

work, and I can simply send it to their computers with a mouse click. "Tom's applications are not limited to the classroom, and he says he can't wait for Hill's upcoming football season. "I am excited about seeing what this will do for our traditional chalk-talk with my assistant coaches and with players. Now we can brainstorm, save our work, hash out complex blocking schemes, and know that we have acres of real estate to save our work. It's pretty awesome!"

CIO Rick Bauer agrees. "I'm impressed with the flexibility of the product," he says, "and with how quickly teachers can see the applications for the product in their classroom. If you have whiteboards, make them smarter – get a mimio."