

WHITEBOARD.FI IS A THREE-IN-ONE DIGITAL TOOL FOR TEACHERS

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Do you ever ask students to sum up what they learned in class, thus inviting them to voluntarily participate. I've done it and you've done it and if you're experiencing low participation in your classroom, it's likely a major reason why that's because asking students to participate voluntarily can really only lead to one of two results - either students choose not to participate or a small group of students will choose to participate nearly every time. Even if every single student raised their hand, you'd still only logistically be able to call on a few students, which might lead you to think that the rest of the class gets it. When in fact they don't.

To address this problem, you might have tried a strategy like writing names on a piece of paper and pulling them out of a jar to mandate participation. But equity sticks still don't get to the underlying issue that we still haven't provided students with the means to be able to all participate at once. So what you really need is a tool that enables mandatory participation and a tool that enables all students to respond simultaneously.

Whiteboard.fi is one of the most effective apps for getting 100% participation [1]. That's because Whiteboard.fi built their app around one of the most effective non-tech tools for getting students actively involved in class - the mini whiteboard. When students have many whiteboards, instead of asking for voluntary participation, you can tell them: "This is all right, everyone. I want you to write down one thing you learned today on your mini whiteboard." And what Whiteboard.fi has done is take this highly effective tool - the mini whiteboard - and given it all the digital upgrades that make digital whiteboards inarguably superior to their physical counterparts.

While a digital whiteboard is not necessary every time you need a whiteboard, there are some instances where it is a huge upgrade from a physical whiteboard. You can save digital whiteboards to view later, you can invite or share digital whiteboards with students, you can zoom into a digital whiteboard to bring clarity to something, you can screen record your lesson over a digital whiteboard for an asynchronous lesson, and you never get marker ink on your fingers or your shirt. So digital whiteboards have a clear advantage over physical ones but unlike other digital whiteboard programs you might already be familiar with, Whiteboard.fi focuses more on optimizing the student mini whiteboard experience as opposed to just focusing on the teacher's whiteboard. Of course, you do still get a teacher's whiteboard with Whiteboard.fi. What I mean is that most digital whiteboards work primarily by allowing students to collaborate on a single board, which is usually the teacher whiteboard and this works for quick collaboration but

it isn't all that practical. If you want students to respond by writing a paragraph or completing a multi-step math problem, the type of work that really merits having their own workspace, let me show you how Whiteboard.fi is different [2].

So let's say, for example, that your ultimate goal is to have students fill in a diagram using Whiteboard.fi. You can first model on your teacher whiteboard how you would fill in the graphic organizer with similarities and differences while projecting your screen for the entire class to see. With Whiteboard.fi, you can choose to push your whiteboard out to every student's individual board so they'll have a template to use as an example to work from and then you can tell students to input their own ideas on the diagram using their own mini whiteboard space. Now instead of a handful of students participating, you'll almost certainly only have a handful of students not participating if any. Also, what I just showed you is a totally free feature in Whiteboard.fi [3].

I often hear a misconception out there that teaching with technology means you suddenly stop doing all the things you would do in a traditional classroom like having class discussions but that's just simply not the case. Even though students just responded using a digital tool, you can still follow up with them and call on students to have a class discussion and when you do, you'll likely get a lot more students to participate since they already practice writing down a response on their own. In Whiteboard.fi, you can take an individual student's response and add it back to the teacher whiteboard for the rest of the class to see and you could use that as a strategy to facilitate a conversation with the rest of the class and that is also a free feature. Now you might be thinking to yourself - sounds great but I already have a 100% participation strategy. Perhaps you've already used the single most recommended instructional strategy ever. The instructional strategy that supposedly solves any problem "the turn and talk turn and talks" are effective for mandating participation and they get all students participating, so what's the problem? The main problem I found with turning talks is that it's just very difficult to know exactly what students are talking about. When they're turning and, all right, go ahead and turn and tell your partner how you would solve the problem.

I'm not saying you necessarily need to cut the turn and talk but what you can do is add the digital mini whiteboard to the mix to add some rigor and accountability.

"All right! I want everyone to turn and tell their partner how they would solve the problem and then write down your answer on your mini whiteboard" and that's the second way that Whiteboard.fi can transform your classroom by making student thinking visible. Whiteboard.fi helps make thinking visible because as students are writing their answer, you'll get a bird's-eye view of all their responses coming through in real time and you can also even click on each board to get a much clearer sense of what students are actually working on. This is also a free feature in addition to augmenting partner work [4].

Being able to see every single student's individual workspace is also incredibly helpful for independent work. During independent work time rather than circulating around the room and stopping at desk to make sure students understand or are doing what they're supposed to be doing, you could use Whiteboard.fi to implement what's referred to as a flexible model of instruction. So what you'd be doing here is observing how students are progressing and then polling students who need additional support or enrichment. For example, in Whiteboard.fi you could create an assignment where students identify unknown words in a reading passage and then write a quick summary. As students are working, you could click on each workspace to see how they're doing.

Because of the way most traditional classrooms are structured, there's often little to no time to give students feedback in class which means we're often left bringing work home to do in the evening or on the weekends. Not only does that mean we're working extra outside of our work hours, it also means that students usually aren't getting feedback on their work for at least a week or sometimes even more. If you're like me and all the research shows that giving students feedback in the moment is one of the most effective ways to accelerate student learning, this is another category where Whiteboard.fi really stands out in addition to giving you a bird's eye view of all your students work.

Whiteboard.fi also allows you to give them quick feedback or more extensive feedback depending on your needs [5]. It is important to note that this ability to give feedback to students is a paid feature of Whiteboard.fi, but it's also a really powerful one, so you might want to consider making an upgrade so say, for example, that students are working on something like labeling a world map in addition to seeing students working in real time you could give them immediate feedback using one of these quick prompts like a heart thumbs up or thumbs down and if you need to give students more in-depth feedback, you can also give them a written response. For example, you might tell a student that they need to check their notes or you might even tell them that you'd like them to stay after classes to get some additional support. As soon as you give them that feedback, they'll see your comment pop up immediately on their screen. Another related very powerful feature in Whiteboard.fi is the ability to not just give feedback but also jump directly into a student's workspace.

It is almost like the ability to hop directly onto a student's computer to help them out. Say, for example, that students were working on an order of operations problem. If you noticed the student making an error, you could circle the step where the error was made.

As a way to help them hone in and figure out their own mistake, I also like just joining student workspaces as a classroom management strategy. The idea here is that as students are working, you would be circulating the room by jumping into each individual student's workspace and I like to leave them a little comment or just let them know that I'm there and that can just function as a way for students to understand that they're not just doing the work in isolation, that their teacher is

actually checking the work out and it should help increase the overall quality of work that students are doing in your class.

References

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Abstract

How to secure 100% student participation in a class discussion, make what students are doing visible to the teacher, and provide an instant feedback to your students at the same time? The answer is a new web application Whiteboard.fi.

Key words: web application, participation in a discussion, feedback, homework completion monitoring, pair work.

Анотація

Як забезпечити 100% участь учнів у обговоренні в класі, зробити те, що роблять учні, видимим для вчителя, і водночас надати своїм учням миттєвий зворотний зв'язок? Відповідь – новий веб-додаток Whiteboard.fi.

Ключові слова: веб-додаток, участь в дискусії, зворотній зв'язок, контроль виконання домашнього завдання, робота в парах.

Анотация

Как обеспечить 100% участие учеников в обсуждениях в классе, сделать то, что выполняют ученики, видимым для учителя, и в то же время обеспечить мгновенную обратную связь со своими учениками? Ответ - новое веб-приложение Whiteboard.fi.

Ключевые слова: веб-приложение, участие в дискуссии, обратная связь, контроль за выполнением домашних заданий, работа в парах.