



Targeted, active collaborative learning at Glenunga International High School

Stimulating the imagination of students and nurturing collaboration were two vital considerations when Glenunga International High School undertook the upgrade of its smartboards. Its assessment of the latest technologies focused on rating them against the school's targeted pedagogy.



Offering programs for gifted students and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, Glenunga International High School (GIHS) fosters some of the highest-achieving students in South Australia.

It is the largest secondary school in the state's public system with 1,800 students from 76 countries.

THE CHALLENGE

Glenunga's approach to the adoption of technology is to enable all students to thrive holistically and achieve in a 21st century context: "It is completely planned and intentional because the world is changing rapidly. Students who can think critically and be creative will build the transferable skills they'll need – for careers

that haven't been created yet. Learning has to be active so they can confidently and clearly communicate their ideas. And collaboration is a huge consideration," says Darren Macolino, the school's Leader of Innovative Technologies.

When GIHS was considering upgrading its fleet of smartboards, the question was: "How can the latest technologies amplify what we're doing pedagogically, into the future? And any change to new tools would be on the basis of evidence based research," Darren says.

THE SOLUTION

In consultation with CompNow, GIHS selected an initial purchase of 10x 75" and 4x 86" ZTouch interactive classroom touchscreens, pre-loaded with a customised image. The built in Android platform with apps like EShare (wireless screen sharing), Whiteboard and Chrome browser. A Chrome Box was also added with MDM capability and access to the Google Play Store.

On delivery, Darren used the ZTouch custom launcher to restrict what apps

could be accessed, and selected wall papers and widgets. He configured the screens to simplify settings: "I limited each to three icons – the whiteboard app, Eshare and Google Chrome to allow classes to surf the web from the board

"We're switched on to continuous improvement & innovation. Our digital tools must fit squarely within a pedagogy that focuses on active, personalised learning. The ZTouch screens facilitate a more collaborative environment for both students and teachers."

Darren Macolino

Innovative Technologies Leader,
Glenunga International
High School

AT A GLANCE

THE CHALLENGE

A market wide comparison of the latest digital smartboards at GIHS assessed how the new tools could contribute to the best active learning environment, for both students and teachers. The displays were also rated against price, any frustrating lag and robustness.

THE SOLUTION

ZTouch interactive classroom touchscreens from CompNow make whiteboards and projector combinations a thing of the past.

THE BENEFITS

- Highly customisable
- No lag - responsive and accurate
- Wireless connectivity from teacher and student devices to the ZTouch
- Height adjustable to accommodate full screen and comfortable use
- Mature technology for long term reliability and competitive pricing

THE PRODUCTS

- CompNow Audio Visual & Collaboration expertise
- ZTouch interactive collaboration displays

ZTOUCH
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itself. And I installed for teachers – the time, date & weather in the corner of the display”.

The inbuilt wireless screen sharing connects student and teacher laptops to the ZTouch. Teachers no longer need to leave the board to scroll down or change window. The screen can be split into three zones so groups of students or individuals can present ideas. “In this environment, our students are actively participating in their learning and working together to find answers,” Darren says.

The ZTouch Panels are used across all learning areas but are proving to be particularly popular in the STEM and arts/ languages faculties.

As a Physics and innovation subjects teacher, Darren cites the example of tiling several student laptop screens with graphs on

the ZTouch at once, showing the class each group’s understanding of a concept. “I can interact with their computers and highlight where they were correct and where they need assistance,” Darren says. “And when I use our iPad connected infrared camera to show heat signatures of objects, I can project it on the huge screen – the results are dramatic.”

“And the benefits of the ZTouch go on. The screens we bought six years ago, we spent a stupendously large amount of money getting them to work and they didn’t have half the features we now have – like wireless screen sharing. The ZTouches just plugged into our network and worked seamlessly. The pricing for these new, larger boards is phenomenal at three times cheaper than the original displays.”

The ZTouch displays are movable on trolleys to share throughout the school. And an innovation by CompNow has seen some mounted on the wall on sliding brackets: “This sounds like a small thing but it’s made the take up of the ZTouch exceptional. Teachers can slide the 90 kg screen up or down with just two fingers. This means they can now use the full area of the boards and adjust them to accommodate smaller or wheelchair bound students,” Darren says.

To support the rapid uptake of new digital technologies such as ZTouch, Darren conducts training session for the school’s staff.

GIHS is extremely happy with the responsive service levels from CompNow. Darren says that CompNow had the panels shipped over from Melbourne to the school in just two days, despite the Covid-19 disruptions.

THE BENEFITS

The introduction of the ZTouches is a significant advance on traditional teaching methods and has taken collaboration to a new level at GIHS.

“With the support of technologies like ZTouch, our students are aided to think critically and creatively as they work in partnership with their teachers. In this rapidly changing world, our school’s pedagogy has to build skills that will transfer to future workplaces,” Darren says.

The ZTouches are very fast and accurately responsive. “They track at the speed you write. This is a critical factor. Our previous displays had no built in computer so would need constant recalibrating – a teacher would be writing on one section, there’d be some lag and the writing would restart somewhere else. Our teachers wouldn’t bother using them as anything but ‘dumb’ displays,” Darren says.

“But our teachers love the ZTouch.. They simply plug their laptop in and start writing on their software of choice or use the built in Whiteboard app and keep their laptop free for other classroom uses. It’s so neat and clean. And unlike with projectors, the 4K high resolution and brightness control in the ZTouch means classes don’t have to work in the dark with the lights turned off and blinds closed,” he says.

In the era of Covid-19 and the advent of remote learning, the ZTouches came into their own as teachers could use them to teach remotely by writing on them and sharing their screen to students at home.

The ZTouch’s tempered glass is incredibly robust which is “vital in a school environment,” Darren says. “They easily survive bumps, pokes and prods when enthusiastic teachers are actively making a point!”

In considering technology purchases and innovative equipment like ZTouch, Darren says: “The key is to realise that, projecting out five years, there won’t be a fundamental change in the specs or features of hardware needed in schools, and being covered with on-site warranty for those five years adds peace of mind. We’ll still have laptops and need classroom projection. Android digital panels, with built in processors and apps that integrate pedagogical features, are now priced so well - you’ll never touch a projector again. We’re at a point where everything’s matured, ZTouch is a long term solution. Now’s the time to upgrade.

“A decade of work integrating quality technology into our teaching practice is showing excellent academic results for our students, especially our year 12s.” Darren says.

