

Great Start Readiness Program Interactive White Boards

Grantees are increasingly considering purchase of interactive, touchscreen white boards and projectors. The interactive white board can be used to research and share children's interests. The boards are designed to be interactive and flexible, offering opportunity for curriculum integration. They can be used in preschools in open-ended ways and can be used in different ways for different groups of children. With young children growing up in a world that is increasingly dominated by digital technologies, interactive white boards can assist in developing a range of computer-related skills and learning dispositions to early childhood services.

The Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services has established the following guidance on interactive white boards:

Interactive white boards can be approved for children's use (Budget: Function Code 118). Before purchase, the Early Childhood Specialist should lead a team to research the product, placement and use in the classroom. The grantee must be able to assure that:

1. The board is posted at an appropriate height for use by preschool children. Note that this is *lower* than the height at which chalkboards/whiteboards are typically positioned in elementary classrooms. Children should not have to use a booster-step or be on their tip-toes or reach over their heads in attempts to participate at the screen.
2. Use of the interactive white board fits into the GSRP daily routine. It is reasonable that an interactive white board be used at one large group time or one small group time per week. The interactive white board requires adult supervision and so should not be used during Choice Time because the teacher's role at Choice Time is to support individual child development throughout the classroom vs being tied to an activity in one part of the classroom.
3. Use of the interactive white board provides for open-ended activities. See POA item III-G.
4. Teachers are vigilant about working at child-level versus standing over a group of children sitting on the floor.
5. The Early Childhood Specialist provides ongoing monitoring to assure that the boards are used in developmentally appropriate ways.

Concerns:

1. The interactive white boards are a large expense for a grant program which typically requires substantial support from the district general fund. Most of the interactive white board activities reviewed by MDE Consultants were more easily and less expensively accomplished with paper, a chalk-board or an actual storybook.
2. Using *concrete* tools is more likely to leave the teacher with a record of children's work, such as graphing or signing-in; this is valuable information for the teachers to transfer into the child assessment tool.
3. Interactive white boards lend themselves to the type of Large Group experiences which are not considered high-quality....most of the activities reviewed included children who were passively watching. Refer to POA items II-H and III-H.

Consider:

1. An interactive table which can be used individually or by small groups of children--
<http://smarttech.com/us/Solutions/Education+Solutions/Products+for+education/Complementary+hardware+products/SMART+Table> and
<http://www2.smarttech.com/st/en-US/Products/SMART+Table/SMARTTableVideos>
2. Interactive white boards are approvable for staff use in function code 221.
3. Interactive white boards are approvable for parent use in function code 331. 

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