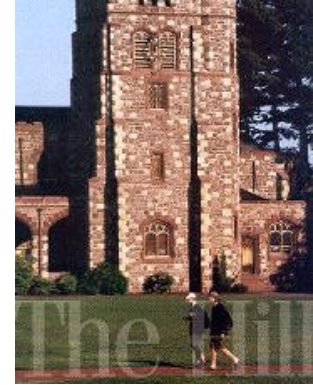


mimio: Making the Difference in Learning at One of America's Leading Academies

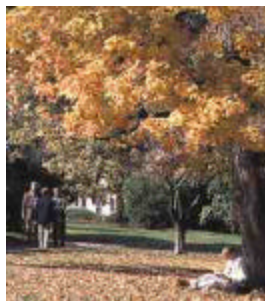
For The Hill School's Chief Information Officer, Rick Bauer, the advent of the digital age in his school meant that traditional chalkboard and chalk would give way to whiteboards and projectors. Little did he realize, however, just how big the demand for digital projection and display technology would be, and how strained the already thin resources would be stretched to provide those resources for his teachers and their students.

And that's right where mimio came in.

Bauer directs the technology initiatives at The Hill School, a 150-year old independent boarding school in western Philadelphia. The progress in deploying digital teaching and learning tools, as well as the educational philosophies that drive their use, has propelled Hill into becoming one of America's leading technology-using schools. The school's 65-building campus is completely digital, delivering high-bandwidth connections to every student dorm room, classroom and every public meeting area. Every student and faculty member owns a powerful notebook computer, insuring 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 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 Hill School, located outside Philadelphia, is one of America's leading independent boarding schools



The use of technology in the classroom meant that the rest of the 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. 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 were the students still having to laboriously re-copy every detail from those boards? Clearly there had to be a better way."

Bauer recently installed 5 mimio devices around the campus, and the results have been impressive. mimio, from Virtual Ink, is a new class of collaboration tool that captures handwritten text and drawings in color onto a Mac or PC for sharing over the Internet. mimio attaches to any standard whiteboard with suction cups, connects quickly to a computer, and uses infrared and ultrasound technology to track the position of your marker stylus and eraser on the board.

"The teachers have always cherished being up in front of their class, walking their students through a difficult concept, finding what they call 'the teaching moment' or 'the blackboard moment,' that 'aha' space in time where learning is transmitted from student to teacher. Putting them at the back of the class running a projector was a real shock, and several faculty expressed



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

doubts of being able to retrofit their teaching styles to the technology.” Bauer also felt that 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?”

All these “smart” solutions 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,” Bauer says, expressing an opinion about the value of certain technology tools. “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?”



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

And a better tool is what The Hill School faculty found in mimio. Now, in English, Mathematics, Science, Technology and even Physical Education, mimio is having a wonderful impact. “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 work, and I can simply send it to their computers with a mouse click.” Gizzi’s applications are not limited to the classroom; 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!”



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

mimio with mimio boardCast software can capture live lectures complete with audio and accompanying real-time 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.

“I’m impressed with the flexibility of the product, and how quickly teachers can see the applications for the product in their classroom,” notes Bauer. “If you have whiteboards, make ‘em smarter—get a mimio.”