

## Projectors and Interactive Whiteboards



As technology becomes ever more engrained into the fabric of daily learning, few tools are as important as the ones educators rely on in their classrooms to present concepts to their students.

From interactive whiteboards equipped with cutting-edge handwriting recognition software to portable projectors that can be tucked under your arm and carried from class to class, or larger devices that can be mounted to the ceiling or pushed around on a cart, today's tech-savvy teachers have at their disposal a dizzying array of innovative solutions for capturing their students' attention—and keeping it.



In February, we asked our readers to vote at **eSchool News Online** for what they consider to be the best projector and presentation solutions for education. In our most popular Readers' Choice Awards program ever, nearly 1,000 of your colleagues responded to our online survey. Here, you'll find a list of what our readers think are the best and most popular projectors and interactive whiteboard systems being used in classrooms today, as well as a brief analysis of our findings and some feedback from your peers.

Though many educators who responded to the online survey voiced a strong commitment to a single brand or manufacturer—InFocus, for example, carried the top spot in all three projector categories—others admitted they knew very little about the vast array of options on the market today. For the most part, educators said, they use whatever technology is purchased by the district—no questions asked.

If that's truly the case, there's a good chance your school might not be getting the most out of its investment. Take some time to read what products are having the greatest impact in schools, and use the information below to help make the right choice for your students. With any luck, you might help your school or district get a little more bang for its buck.

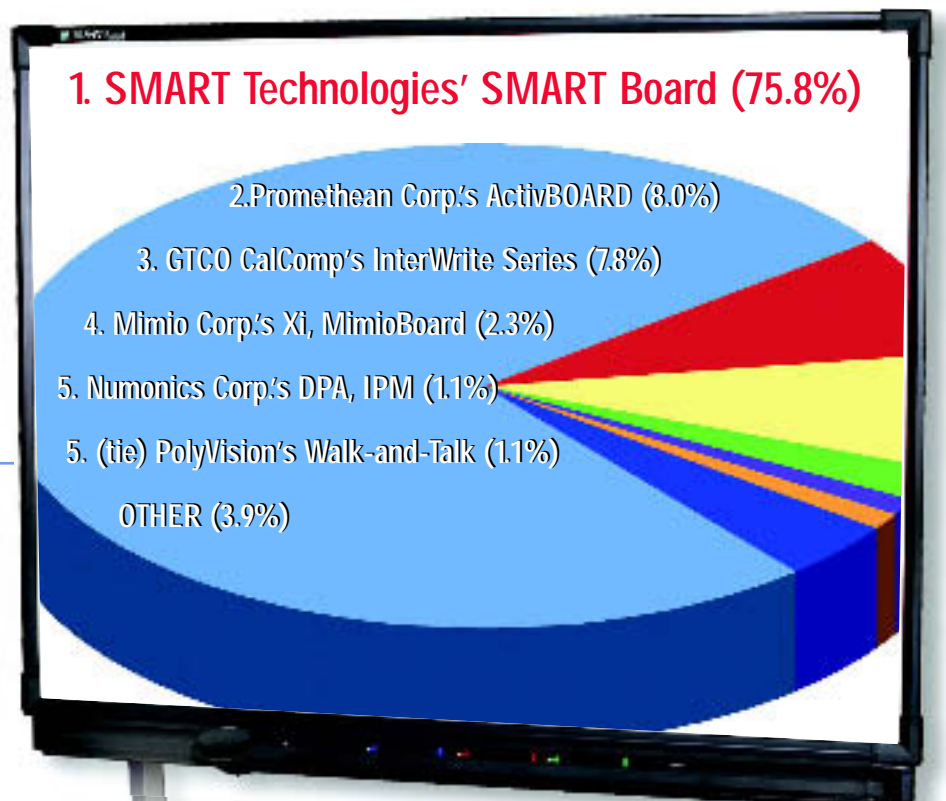
### Best interactive whiteboard system for education:

Maybe it's because, as the original electronic whiteboard for education, the SMART Board from Canadian company SMART Technologies Inc. has become synonymous with this product category. Or maybe it's because the SMART Board really is considered superior to the competition. Whatever the case, the SMART Board was a runaway winner in this category, securing more than three-fourths (75.8 percent) of the vote. "I absolutely love it," wrote one educator in favor of the SMART Board. "The SMART Board enhances all of my lessons and my students' presentations." Another wrote, "It's been the best thing that's ever happened to my kids."

So what makes the SMART Board such a hot commodity in schools? According to our readers, the technology is readily available through a wide range of educational grants, not to mention compatible with a variety of interactive software programs designed to enhance student participation. "It's great for integrating technology into the curriculum," wrote one satisfied customer. Another praised the SMART Board for its touch-screen functionality, calling it "fun" and "easy to use in the classroom."

Despite a distant second-place finish, Promethean's ActivBOARD also received a fair share of accolades from voters. "ActivBOARD was created for the educational environment," wrote one survey respondent, who said its usefulness in the classroom is evident to even the most casual of observers. Its "integration is seamless," another reader wrote.

Also receiving votes in this category: Mimio Corp's MimioBoard and Xi (2.3 percent), which was praised by one voter for its "portability and flexibility"; Numonics Corp's DPA and IPM systems (1.1 percent); and PolyVision's Walk-and-Talk product (also 1.1 percent).

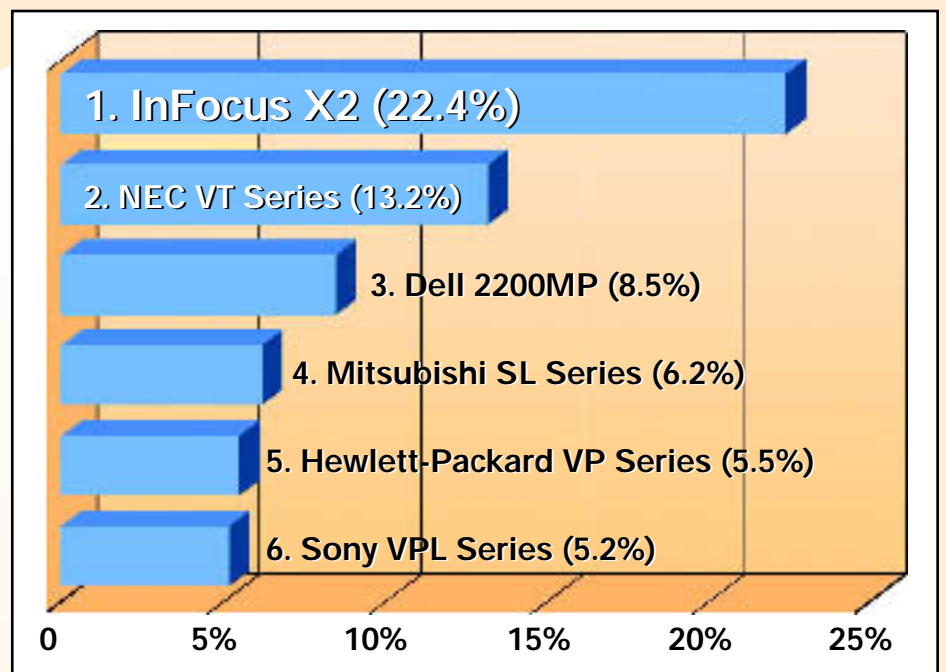


## Best low-resolution (SVGA) portable projector for education:

Topping the list of the best low-resolution, or SVGA (800 x 600 pixels), portable projectors was the InFocus X2 model, capturing 22.4 percent of the vote, followed by NEC's VT Series (13.2 percent) and Dell's popular 2200MP (8.5 percent). At less than 7 pounds, these portable units are lightweight enough for teachers to carry under their arms and are typically less expensive than higher-resolution XGA models. Still, educators who responded to our survey for the most part seemed pleased with the performance and power reportedly packed into many of these base-model projectors.

Clearness, sharpness, dependability, and price were among the attributes that helped separate the top three vote-getters from the rest of the pack, according to respondents who took the time to tell us about their choice. "They seem to know projectors," wrote one educator about InFocus, adding that "they aren't just some electronics company" that dabbles in all varieties of gadgets. *eSchool News* readers also had good things to say about NEC's VT Series, which received compliments for its warranty, bulb life, and overall customer service. Impressed with the VT's portability, one educator said, "I use it in the classroom, and I take it with me when I give workshops and lessons."

Other notable vote-getters in this category included the Mitsubishi SL Series (6.2 percent), the Hewlett-Packard VP Series (5.5 percent), and the Sony VPL Series (5.2 percent), which one respondent called a real "workhorse."

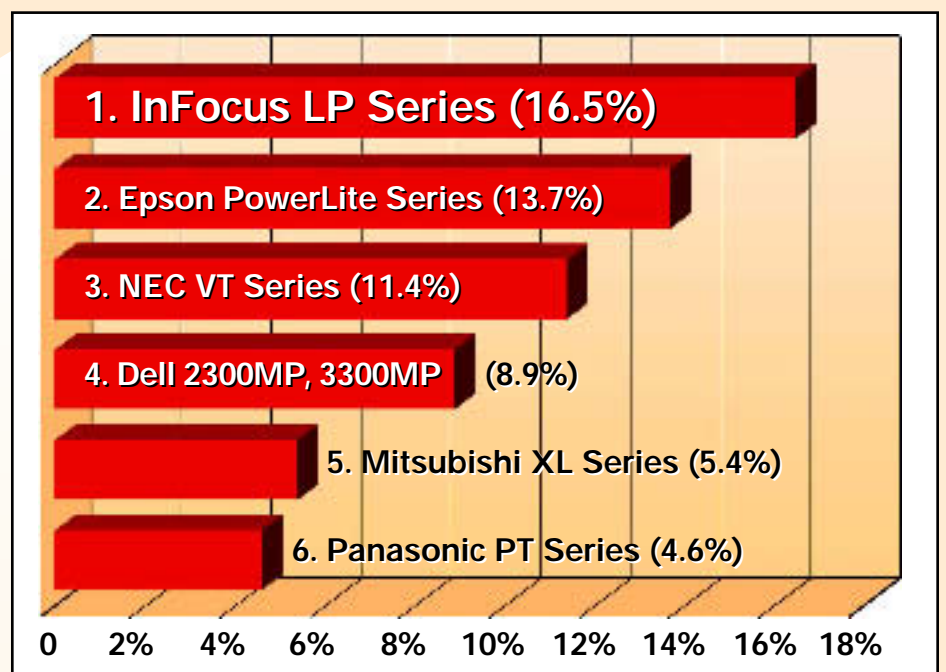


## Best high-resolution (XGA) portable projector for education:

By far the most competitive category in this year's survey, the nod for best high-resolution, or XGA (1,020 x 768 pixels), portable projector goes to the InFocus LP Series (16.5 percent). Brighter and more powerful than its lower-resolution X2 cousin, the LP Series was touted by survey respondents as dependable and durable, with a "crisp, clear picture." One satisfied customer said the LP Series provides "the most features for the money."

The Epson PowerLite Series and NEC VT Series were close behind, with 13.7 percent and 11.4 percent of the vote, respectively. One respondent called the Epson PowerLite Series "easy for even technology-phobic teachers to operate," as well as "very user-friendly, light, and durable." Dell's 2300 MP landed in fourth place, with 8.9 percent of the vote, while Mitsubishi's XL Series (5.4 percent) and Panasonic's portable PT Series (4.6 percent) closed out the top six.

One projector that didn't make the top six, but received several accolades from educators familiar with it, was the BOXLIGHT XP Series. "It's worked in the places we've needed it and has the best price point," wrote one survey respondent who favors BOXLIGHT.



## Best stationary projector for education:

In the race for best stationary projector—a category representing all those machines weighing more than 7 pounds—InFocus again captured the top spot, with 29.8 percent of the vote. Writing in favor of the company's larger, more powerful LP projectors, one educator praised InFocus for its reputation in both service and quality. Another called the LP "simply the best."

Coming in a distant second was Dell's 4100MO (11.6 percent), which one educator praised as "very user-friendly, with lots of tech support behind it." Dell was followed closely by Hewlett-Packard's XP Series (9.4 percent) and Mitsubishi's XL Series (8.6 percent), which at least one educator thought should have finished higher. "Mitsubishi offers the best reliability and the most exceptional quality with very few breakdowns," this reader stated, adding, "[It] must be very close to, if not, the most reliable on the market today."

Rounding out the top six in this category were two products making their only appearance in this year's survey: the Sharp NoteVision Series (7.5 percent) and Canon LV Series (5.9 percent). In particular, Canon was praised by one respondent for nurturing its client relationship and providing additional support long after the initial point of sale. Plus, this reader noted, "Canon will replace any lens on their product."

