

Five Reasons Why Some Educators Still Prefer Chalkboards

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Prior to the chalkboard, every student had an individual slate made of a wood board painted over with black grit to practice penmanship, solve arithmetic and answer questions from the teacher. Educators paced the room, evaluating each student's slate for answers, as there was no means of visually presenting information to a roomful of students all at once. This style of teaching and learning was incredibly individualized compared to the active-learning classrooms of today.

Chalkboards in the classroom kicked off the collaborative learning movement. All communication was now communal. Students learned in groups and shared knowledge with each other. Lesson formats changed, with instructors teaching many students at once versus a one-on-one exchange, which led class sizes to increase. The board became the mindshare of the classroom.



By the mid-19th century, every classroom in the United States had a blackboard to teach students. This was the only teaching tool in the classroom until whiteboards came along during the late 1980s. But, not all professors and classrooms switched over to the modern mechanism.

With the many benefits touted about whiteboards, why do some educators still prefer chalkboards in today's age? The following five factors explain.

Accessibility: In many developing countries, chalkboards far outnumber whiteboards because they are easier to access. Vipin Makkar, regional manager for PolyVision in India, says, "India is one of the major markets for chalk surfaces in the region. They are very popular in education segments because the running cost of chalkboards is much less expensive compared to markerboards or glass boards. Chalk is also less expensive than markers."



Penmanship: Many believe that penmanship is superior on a chalkboard. Chalkboards are often sold with lines for this very purpose, especially when students are just learning to write. Penmanship also holds more importance in certain languages. Japanese, Chinese and Korean are all examples of languages where the characters are intricate, and penmanship is part of the expression of the word. Chi Kin Tam, a regional sales manager for PolyVision in Hong Kong, says this is a main reason why educators still use chalkboards. “Another key reason for preferring chalk in Chinese market is that we think chalk is a better way to present the Chinese calligraphy. The Chinese characters are much thicker and writing with chalk is a closer representation of traditional writing with a brush.”



Tactile Nature: Chalk feels more like a pen or pencil when writing. For that reason, many educators prefer writing with chalk versus markers. Makkar notes that this is one reason why teachers in India use chalkboards. “Teachers in schools prefer to write with chalk because of writing experience and feel.” Also the scrape of an underline and tapping the chalk on the board add emphasis to specific points.

Dust-free Chalk: Often, when people think of chalkboards, they imagine the clouds of dust that covered the air when erasing content on the board. Today, with many concerns around health and asthma for young children, more manufacturers are producing dust-free chalk. With this concern out of the way, Makkar says the preference for chalk is still growing in India. Tam agrees with Makkar, “The dust chalk creates in the classroom is not nice to deal with so the market starts to look at dustless chalk/liquid chalk.”

Nostalgia: For many, the thought of a chalkboard conjures up a classic university setting, where the wall is full of knowledge, from math formulas to philosophical theories. This nostalgia for days past is what keeps many professors using chalkboards. It’s the way they learned, and it’s the way they prefer to teach. [Professors at the School of Mines & Technology in South Dakota](#) are fighting to keep their chalkboards while the school undergoes a renovation for this very reason. For those that value this nod to yesteryear in the classroom, chalkboards add an emotional aspect to teaching.



With these five reasons, it's easy to see why whiteboards haven't erased chalkboards from history. With modern features, like a range of colors, sizes and dust-free chalk, chalkboards can offer contemporary and collaborative learning environments to classrooms worldwide, and keep a bit of history involved in the process.