



Case Study: Canadian Mental Health Association (Durham)

Interactive whiteboards are making mental health education more accessible and engaging

About our customer

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Durham is an integrated community mental health and primary care hub that has provided services to the Durham Region in Ontario for over 60 years.



The Recovery College Wellness Centre (RCWC) focuses on a person-centered model that creates positive learning experiences and emphasizes connection, empowerment, and hope. Courses range from self-care to specialized peer support groups, can be taken virtually or in-person and are developed and taught by adult educators and peer support specialists.

Challenge

- Limited visibility and community awareness of CMHA's new RCWC
- Collaboration barriers between adult educators and students
- Learning resources that didn't encourage engagement or support accessibility
- Technology issues that forced instructors to take time away from students

CMHA Durham previously had an unstructured support and wellness program where students could drop in and engage with peers in an informal setting.

In early 2020, they launched the RCWC to provide a more structured learning program with classes designed to offer a series of mental

health and wellness courses. Facilitators who have real-life experiences with mental health lead the classes and offer students a supportive environment where they can improve life skills, learn new ones and build a foundation for more resilience and well-being.

“We wanted our community to see the new Recovery College Wellness Centre as a legitimate educational program. However, we didn't want to create an overly formal space that could discourage students from engaging and connecting as part of their recovery journey.”

— Tracey Hardinge, Performance Manager for Clinical Programs and Services, CMHA Durham

Instructors had been projecting course materials onto regular television screens they plugged into their laptops. But this setup posed challenges. Since the screens were mounted on walls, instructors couldn't rearrange classrooms to promote different learning models. Students had to face the screens at all times.

Setting up the technology also took time away from learning. When instructors connected speakers to the televisions, they never knew which device would carry the sound and often stopped class to troubleshoot issues. Meanwhile, students had trouble reading the small fonts on the screens.

The fixed displays, along with old-school blackboards, also made the classrooms feel formal. Many students were uncomfortable standing in front of everyone and sharing their stories, making it hard for the program to build a sense of community.

“I had used interactive whiteboards at a previous job and thought they were a dream. I knew they could help us facilitate learning and break down barriers between students and staff.”

— Candace Singh, Adult Educator,
CMHA Durham

Solution

- Two interactive flat panel displays with Windows controllers and pen and eraser sets
- Training and examples for how the new display technology could be used for engaging students
- Implementation support for quick set-up and easy adoption

The RCWC wanted to replace the fixed TV screen with “giant tablets” that were easy to use and offered instructors greater flexibility. So the team started looking for solutions and chose two interactive whiteboards from Ricoh that could make teaching easier and learning more engaging.

Unlike the old televisions, instructors could use the whiteboards to access the internet and make classes much more interactive. Students and adult educators would have the flexibility to draw on screens, mark up documents live and print directly from the device. They would also have the freedom to move them around the room and building to support different activities and adaptive class configurations.

Results

- CMHA grew the reputation of the RCWC and increased enrollment by 30%
- Students and educators have a positive, interactive in-class experience
- Collaboration is more engaging and productive between students and educators
- Instructors spend less time setting up and troubleshooting technology issues
- More accessible and equitable learning experiences, supporting both in-person and virtual students

This display technology has helped the RCWC achieve its goal of being seen as a valuable educational program, as they add sophistication to the classrooms. But, unlike the old setup, they make the classes seem less stuffy and formal.

Students are excited to use the new technology and love to engage with it during class. The interactive whiteboards have boosted class participation and encouraged students to share their stories with others.

Meanwhile, instructors are saving a lot of time. They don't need to get to class early or stay late to set up and take down technology. They just turn them on and start engaging with students. “The interactive whiteboards give students a positive learning experience. They also exponentially reduce our instructors' preparation time and make it much easier for them to communicate with students,” said Alec King, CHMA's communications lead.

Other departments have learned about the success of the whiteboards and want to use them for their programs. While the RCWC team is delighted that they are so helpful, they'd love to keep them a "hidden secret" so they're always available for the program's classes.

“Using an interactive whiteboard is like using a tablet, which makes the learning curve very short. We were up and running quickly and no longer need to spend tons of time at the beginning of class setting up technology.”

— Marie Logan, Lead Adult Educator at the Recovery College, CMHA Durham



Discover how Ricoh's interactive whiteboards can make your educational spaces more interactive and engaging. [Learn More.](#)

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