Teaching without an electronic whiteboard.

If you are lucky enough to have an electronic whiteboard in your classroom you will know what a wonderful resource it is for presenting interesting lessons to the children. But, if you don't have one what can you do? Lots! The heart of an electronic whiteboard is actually the computer that drives it and most of you have already got that in the form of a Teacher's laptop or a classroom computer. The trick is to commandeer one of the class computers (or use your laptop) to become a *presentation computer*. Next connect it to a large monitor which the children can see. If you have a laptop the extra monitor just plugs into the laptop and you set the computer to display on both at once. A 19" monitor is a good size. One monitor is not really enough but it will do. If you are using a computer rather than a laptop and want to add a monitor for the children to view and one for you to view then you need a VGA distributor (approximately $40). This distributor will let you connect up to 4 monitors to your computer (or laptop) and is what you would normally use in a classroom to get 3 monitors for the children to view and one foldback one for the teacher to view. Now you have a presentation suite that

can quite nicely work with a whole class of children. Another approach is to use a projector instead of the extra monitors. This costs between $1200~$3500 depending on the projector chosen (techie speak – get 2000 lumen, and greater than 1000:1 contrast ratio as minimum specs. You need the high contrast ratio to be able to handle video/DVD input, you need the high lumen rating to handle the bright classroom environment.) This option is quite good because you can use the projector with an electronic whiteboard later if one becomes available. You can also aim for a large LCD or Plasma screen. I taught a year 2 class with a 50" Plasma quite successfully but like the projector, that is a fairly expensive budget item. The VGA distributor is the cheapest solution because you can use recycled monitors and probably only need to spend about $60 on the distributor and the VGA cables.

If you have an electronic whiteboard in your school you may be able to install the same software on your non whiteboard computer (with limited functionality because it is not attached to a board), check your license. But there are plenty of ways to use the system without that dedicated software. The important thing is that you have got the computer out in front of the class and they can see what you are doing with it.

Now you can fire up Encarta and show pictures. You can present multi-media video and probably DVDs (depending on your computer). You can run powerpoints and other pre-prepared presentations. You can show the Internet to the whole class, play music and demonstrate almost anything…