

2016-2017 Award Winners: Large Venue Projectors for the Classroom

projectorreviews.com/projector-reports/classroom-projector-report-best-education-projectors-2016-2017/2016-2017-award-winners-l

Large Venue Projectors are a key part of the overall education projector market. Look for them in larger university classrooms, and also in K-12 school auditoriums and multi-purpose rooms.

Lower powered, and often less featured education projectors typically can't handle the job in those really large classrooms and K-12 auditoriums. But, all of these easily can. Winners in this "class" should have no problem handling a typical university classroom or lecture hall with a hundred, even two or four hundred students.

Until recently most sufficiently high powered projectors were also extremely expensive and incredibly capable. This year we've seen more segregation, The high priced feature laden projectors are still the majority, but companies are bringing out more high power projectors, that are leaving out expensive features such as interchangeable lenses, lens shift, edge blending, etc., that aren't needed in most large classrooms. The result is that some of this year's winners are less expensive than last year's. Some may not be quite as versatile as others, but make a whole lot of sense in many, if not most cases.

All the larger venue projectors focused on in this year's Education Report are WUXGA resolution. In all cases, the manufacturers of these projectors also offer similar versions with lower resolutions for often dramatically less money. Not every classroom needs WUXGA or 1080p resolution, but since the feature sets between a WUXGA and a WXGA large venue projector are probably almost identical, our comments, and our awards, would likely be justified if we instead reviewed the WXGA versions of these projectors. That is of course, one assumes that pricing will also be relatively consistent.

We wish to thank Epson America for sponsoring this year's Best Classroom Projectors report.



NEC NP-P502WL

It's not that this NEC projector – the P502WL, is all that inexpensive. Rather, that it serves up a laser light engine for a price more similar to competing lamp based projectors!

Naturally there are a number of advantages to having a solid state light engine, starting with no need to change lamps, and the time and the support effort that entails.

Click Image to Enlarge

Perhaps the biggest difference and key factor relating to the value proposition, is that this is the only one of the large venue projectors reviewed in the last year, that does not offer interchangeable lenses, and that always means a big dollar savings.

It should also be noted that the NP-P502WL is WXGA (1280×800) unlike other large models reviewed. Hey, not everyone needs 1080p or WUXGA! Schools in general still buy lots of WXGA, and even XGA projectors, for the cost savings, if nothing else.



For even more perspective, last year's winner for Best Value in this category – Epson's 1985WU, also lacked interchangeable lenses. That Epson is about \$1000 less (list price), but then it runs on lamps, not a laser engine (and is higher res). Long term savings from not having to change lamps, would probably make the NEC an even better overall value if they were both the same resolution, but since they are not, the value propositions are similar.



This is a 5000 lumen projector more than enough for the “average” large university classroom or a small auditorium. Where it pales compared to the more expensive projectors in this report, is the lack of features not normally needed in the classroom, but more for digital signage – museums, etc. and that is edge blending and the associated capabilities such as geometric alignment brightness and color matching, that are needed in multi-projector high end setups.

This NEC's color is great in the “best modes”, but if there's one downside, it's that being a DLP projector it can't put out near as many lumens doing great color (due to low color lumens). But that has been factored into our award selection. Still, there's tons of brightness in brightest modes, and still respectable brightness for that super-sized classroom, with good color.

In addition to all of that, consider that NEC has an aggressive Education program called Star Student, with extended warranties, and volume pricing.

Considering the NEC starts out at \$3499 before any educational discounts, it is aggressively priced. Just to give you a taste of the automatic discounts from their program, a school or district buying 5 P series projectors (like this one) will receive an extra P series for free. That right there is a 16.67% extra discount! NEC also shows online a 10% discount for Education done through their dealers. Whether the two programs are mutually compatible, your NEC dealer or NEC will have to answer that question for you.

Bottom line – the NEC is a great value in a laser powered projector with the ability to tackle that large university classroom...

Epson Powerlite Pro G7905 - Best Pure/High Performance

I'm a big fan of Sony's laser powered FHZ65 projector, but the Epson Pro G7905 simply stole the show, walking away with our top award in this large venue category.

The G7905 is the flagship of Epson's G series projectors, with this model just starting to ship as I publish this. The full review, in fact, won't publish for probably two weeks after this report goes live. The pre-production unit provided performed flawlessly (that's rare).

[Click Image to Enlarge](#)

Here's the scoop: About the only thing missing is a laser light engine (no worries I'm also reviewing Epson's \$21,999 12,000 lumen laser projector (which other than being brighter and laser powered, is very similar in capabilities).

The G7905's 7000 lumens are plenty for pretty much any large classroom at any university on this planet. The resolution is WUXGA (1920x1200), but the “sizzle” is Epson's pixel shifting engine and its ability to accept 4K content and put it up on the screen looking far more detailed and sharper than any projector handling 1080p or WUXGA



content. Of course the pixel shifting also significantly improves 1080p and WUXGA content.

The pixel shifting/4K abilities will make this a top choice in classrooms dealing in the sciences, architecture, engineering, the film arts and other areas demanding max resolution and precision.

Add to that 8 interchangeable lenses, an impressive single unit education price (Brighter Futures program) of \$4539.



Here's a projector that, thanks to handling standard 4K protected content (HDMI 2.0, HDCP 2.2) should have a practical life of a decade or more, when "lesser" competitors fall by the wayside when there's demand for accepting 4K content.

In addition, you get all the other bells and whistles, edge blending, multi-projector, projection mapping abilities, advanced networking, lens memory and lots more!

That's a lot of upside, what about downside? Every so often, a lamp will need replacing, also a lot of the advanced features won't work when doing the pixel shifting 4K, such as edge blending, and CFI. Still, when you need the highest available resolution and detail as top priority, then losing some features that you would only expect to work with real 4K content, if you bought a true 4K projector, that's reasonable. Especially since I don't think you can find a true 4K projector with 7000 lumens under \$50K! (Sony offers a 4K with 5000 lumens for \$35K list!)

Bottom line: This is a brand new, next-gen projector. Lots of everything, aggressively priced, 3 year warranty with 3 year rapid replacement program? If there is serious competition anywhere near the price, I haven't discovered it yet! Well OK, there is Epson's similar 7000 lumen laser projector the L1200 – which we will eventually review (also just starting to ship) but for most universities the extra \$2000 and change (edu price per unit) for the laser projector (which does have a couple less features) will be hard to justify. Basically 10 of these G7905's will cost slightly less than 7 of the lasers, and that means a college can equip almost half again as many classrooms for the same upfront bucks. This Epson is all about performance. Amazing picture in terms of color and clarity. Enough said!

Larger Venue Projectors: Still-Current Previous Winners

Projector Model	Image	Overview	Review	Specs	Type
Epson PowerLite Pro 1985WU		Overview	Review	Specs	3LCD technology, Wired networking
Epson PowerLite Pro G6900WU		Overview	Review	Specs	Standard throw, Wired networking
Panasonic PT-RZ670U		Overview	Review	Specs	DLP Technology, Wired Networking
Sony VPL-FHZ55		Overview	Review	Specs	Standard throw, Wired networking

Four Large Venue Projector Award Winners from Previous Years (still current)

As noted, the large venue projectors have a longer life as current products than the smaller, less expensive projectors do. As a result, many of the projectors considered in the past two year's reports are still current models.

By including them here, you have a larger selection of stand out projectors to consider.

Epson Powerlite Pro G6900WU: Best In Classroom:

The Epson G6900WU was a top pick thanks to being an aggressively priced (especially for schools) high brightness projector, that is just loaded with features. Suitable for small auditoriums or large university type classrooms, it measured close enough to it's claimed 6000 lumens to tackle almost any indoor environment.

Here's a very capable projector with education pricing in the \$5000 range. It is definitely a direct competitor of this year's Performance winner, the Canon WUX6000. Each has some advantages, but overall, they are more similar than different.

The G6900WU remains the flagship of Epson's G series commercial projectors. It is a true WUXGA projector. Only their Z series is more capable (brighter and sporting features like dual lamp design), but then their WUXGA Z series projectors have list prices mostly in the over \$20,000 range!

Advanced networking, interchangeable lenses, of course. But also HD-SDI, and HD-BaseT for easier installation in larger rooms. That means low cost wiring to sources, and especially to live video, and in both cases, over large distances, which can mean huge savings in large classrooms and lecture halls.

Single lamp design, 6000 lumens, WUXGA. Great three year warranty with three years of replacement program, and aggressive educational pricing!

[Click Image to Enlarge](#)

Sony VPL-FHZ55: Best in Classroom - Large Venue – Solid State





PROJECTOR



REVIEWS.com

2014-2015

BEST IN CLASSROOM LARGE VENUE SOLID STATE PROJECTOR

The Sony FHZ55, or 2014-15 winner for large venue laser, may well be the role model for today's laser projectors

Sony's laser projector also wow'd us when we first reviewed it. OK, wasn't a match in brightness compared to last year's Panasonic winner, but that Panny was far more expensive. The Sony claims a mere 4000 lumens, and delivers over 2800 with especially good color. Advanced networking, WUXGA resolution, 3LCD panels, laser – I said that already – and lots of other goodies, including edge blending, 360 degree operation, DICOM. And then there's the warranty: 5 years parts and labor, and overnight replacement program, plus, a 12,000 hour warranty on the laser light engine. All of that and an under \$5000 MSRP!

[Click Image to Enlarge](#)

This Sony WUXGA (1920×1200) 3LCD projector produces really good color in all but its brightest mode (Presentation) which has the usual extra green push, but not as bad as many. More to the point, the projector will produce about 2800 lumens with respectable color, and great color still well above 2000 lumens. Better still, the Sony VPL-FHZ55 should still be producing close to 2000 lumens of great color years from now. Note that 2000 lumens was the standard for years for rental and staging (and few had new lamps, so produced far less). The key here, is good color and brightness that fades far less than lamp projectors, and over far more years.



The rest of Sony's feature set includes a standard 1.6:1 zoom lens, the picture by picture (side by side), DICOM support – for displaying medical films and images, and advanced networking with Crestron and AMX support. Geometric related features include lens shift, 360 degree operation, edge blending, and warping and corner

correction.

All considered, the FHZ55 was the best representative of a full featured solid state projector we could find in the price range. Last year we had expected the Panasonic RW430 to compete directly against this Sony, but it measured far, far less useable lumens (despite high lumen claims), so the Panny could not qualify as a large venue projector. The lumen counts aren't that high, but then lamps lose 50% brightness before replacement. The FHZ55 I felt, at the time, had just enough brightness to qualify for larger venues.

Although not an award winner this year, the FHZ65 which we reviewed is a brighter, and equally solid performer.

Upfront costs of this Sony laser projector – like any laser projector -is higher than lamp projectors, but long term savings especially when it comes to not having to change lamps, should make the Sony's value proposition seem very reasonable, and it's convenience, superior.

Sony stands behind the VPL-FHZ55 with a five year parts and labor warranty, and a best I've seen yet, 12,000 warranty on their light engine! Sony also offers a rapid replacement program. Nice support!

Epson Powerlite 1985W

This Epson 1985W projector is most similar to this year's NEC winner. Both picked up value awards. The 1985W, however, is WUXGA while the NEC 502L derives much of its value by being a lower resolution WXGA projector.

On the other hand, the NEC offers a laser light engine at a most reasonable price.

Both the Epson and the NEC, unlike most projectors in this category, rely on non-interchangeable zoom lenses with lots of zoom range, while our other contestants all offer interchangeable lenses, which tends to dramatically up the overall price.

The Epson offers all the usual Epson benefits – the 3 year warranty with 3 year replacement program for schools, low cost replacement lamps, and sophisticated software like Easy MP and, especially Moderator, for sharing student content on "the big screen".

Click Image to Enlarge

Panasonic

This 2nd generation Panasonic laser projector proved extremely impressive. Unlike it's first generation predecessor this one cranks out the lumens it claimed, (their first generation only met claims if only fed grayscale content – less than half of claim with color content.)

This Panny offers a full selection of interchangeable lenses. When we first reviewed it, I believe it was also the only laser projector offering an ultra short throw lens. That plus its ability to operate at virtually any angle, makes it suitable or a lot of interesting digital signage, etc.

And that includes things like museum type displays, making this Panasonic extremely versatile.

You won't believe what you get for the price!

ASK Proxima C3307-A

- 3,100 lumens
- Free replacement lamp!
- Tons of inputs, including HDMI
- 3-year warranty

Only **\$499**

SAVE NOW

ProjectorPeople.com

PROJECTOR REVIEWS.COM

2015-2016 BEST IN CLASSROOM

BEST VALUE

LARGE VENUE PROJECTOR

Epson Powerlite 1985W won this award for the 2015-16 school year

Plenty of brightness – that would be 6500 lumens claimed, and an overall comprehensive feature set including 24/7 operation is all part of the package.

When we reviewed this Panasonic it had a roughly \$25,000 list price. Although this isn't a projector you can find pricing on, online, expect it to be dramatically less, as it would have to be to stay competitive. Just for perspective, the recently announced Epson lasers would be direct competition, with Epson's 7000 lumen laser selling for under \$8500.

We had hoped to bring in one of the newer Panasonic lasers ever since Infocomm in the summer of 2015, but we can't seem to talk Panasonic out of review units any more.



[Click Image to Enlarge](#)

[Next Page](#)

[2016-2017 Award Winners: Other \(LED\) Projectors for the Classroom](#)

**PROJECTOR
REVIEWS.COM**
**2015-2016 BEST IN CLASSROOM
BEST HIGH PERFORMANCE
LARGE VENUE PROJECTOR**

Panasonic's RZ670U was the best combination for high power and laser, in the 2015-16 Classroom projector report

