
TEACHER EDUCATION

Social Studies Education

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While new demands of schools are always emerging, a substantial effort has begun in the last decade to transform social studies teaching and learning through technology. Social Studies educators call for reformation of existing curricula to adapt to a new technological age, one in which students are active participants and where technology is not relegated to one hour a week, but seamlessly threaded throughout the curriculum. This curriculum would emphasize citizenship, and move students from apathy to action, not only by studying the implications of technology, but by being involved in its implementation. Margaret Crocco, a prominent social studies researcher and past-Chair of the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), commented,

I believe the importance of technology lies in its ability to leverage constructivist approaches in the teaching of social studies...The chief value of technology lies, therefore, in providing the leverage so urgently needed for moving social studies instruction away from passive, teacher-dominated approaches emphasizing recall and regurgitation toward active student centered forms of learning demanding critical and conceptual thinking from all students at all levels. (<http://www.citejournal.org/vol1/iss3/currentissues/socialstudies/article2.htm>)

In order for teachers to be capable of teaching in a way that reflects constructivist philosophy and pedagogy, social studies educators need to be trained how to use technology according to the prevailing guidelines and strategies (Mason, Berson, Diem, Hicks, Lee, & Dralle, 2000; Doolittle & Hicks, 2003. p. 89-92). Additionally, they need to understand the potential for technology to assist in preparing students for active, engaged citizenship in a pluralistic, multicultural democracy. The SITE presentations in social studies emphasize many of these key issues. Several presentations address the role of, effectiveness of, and potential for social studies methods courses and technology courses in training future teachers to integrate technology in meaningful ways. The importance of diversity and issues related to women and global studies comprise another foci for the SITE social studies section. A number of presentations focus on issues surrounding the teaching and learning history, including the role of historical inquiry and digital primary sources in effective history instruction. Finally, the SITE social studies presentations include attention to the hardware and software of technology integration, with presentations that discuss the role of PDAs, ebooks, and GIS software in social studies teaching and learning. We hope that the sessions presented at this conference provide an ongoing spark for what we hope will become an in-depth conversation about the potential technology holds within the social studies curriculum.