Technology as a Tool for Facilitating a Curriculum for Social Justice

This presentation will (a) provide teachers and others with strategies for facilitating students’ knowledge of social issues confronting us nationally as well as globally, and (b) demonstrate tools for promoting activism utilizing emerging technologies. Session participants will explore the concept of social justice and the role that all of us must play to ensure social justice for all. We will review emerging technological tools that not only assist students in developing their understanding of the historical and current struggles for social justice, but also allow students to engage in practices that promote social justice. Teachers must prepare students to participate meaningfully and responsibly not only in the classroom but also in society as a whole. Meaningful and responsible participation requires (a) critical examination of society, and (b) action to correct injustices that exist. Students must be taught that if the world is to be a better place where everyone is treated fairly, then they have to work to make it so. This is their responsibility as citizens of their country and inhabitants of the earth. To foster this consciousness, teachers must make students aware of their social and political environment--nationally and globally--and encourage responsible involvement (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2004). Moreover, knowledge and action must go hand in hand.

The modern classroom equips teachers with tools to move beyond the confines of textbooks, chalkboard instruction, and paper and pencil activities to an instructional environment facilitated by multimedia platforms and supported by worldwide internet access. We will demonstrate that these technological advances make the challenge of integrating social justice into the curriculum significantly easier. This presentation illustrates the use of emerging technologies to facilitate student knowledge and competency in the area of social justice. In this presentation, first, the concept of social justice will be explored in the context of promoting students’ awareness and activism. Second, technological tools that can enhance the implementation of a “curriculum for social justice” will be reviewed. Finally, we will present case studies that allow participants to explore the use of emerging technologies. An annotated list of informative and interactive Web sites, and relevant software will be provided.

Some of the technological tools to be reviewed include the following:

1. **E-mail / E-pal.** Electronic mail allows students to communicate with each other in the classroom as well as with students in other cultures, countries, cities, and communities. Students can learn first-hand about activities across the globe from other students in distant places.

2. **Computer Simulations.** These are programs that simulate authentic experiences, allowing students to make decisions and see consequences. Given simulated social challenges and problems, students can explore ways of addressing these issues using models of social equity and justice.

3. **Electronic Portfolios.** Students can compile samples of their work electronically, illustrating what they have learned on a given topic over a period of time. These portfolios not only demonstrate developing awareness, but could be used to provide shared knowledge bases

4. **Electronic Databases.** Computers enable students to gather, manage, and analyze data electronically, facilitating the collection and manipulation of
large volumes of information. Students can utilize compiled data and facts to make informed decisions about social issues presented.

5. *Online News.* The internet literally places the most current events around the world at students’ fingertips. News of all kinds is readily accessible with the click of the “mouse.” Students can develop awareness of world events, and examine global perspectives on selected topics; and based on this comparative analysis, they can develop more informed opinions.

6. *Digital Videotaping and Photography.* Students can record and photograph images and events that can be stored and manipulated for the purpose of learning and sharing across venues, near and far.

An annotated list of informative and interactive Web sites, and relevant software will be provided. Ultimately, this presentation will develop participants’ knowledge base in using emerging technologies as tools in the implementation of a curriculum for social justice.