Shyness has been a difficult disorder for many people and is on the rise, according to studies done on this topic at Stanford University. According to Lynne Henderson from the Shyness Clinic in Portola Valley, California and Philip Zimbardo from Stanford University in Stanford, California, they maintain that technology has played an integral part in this increase of shyness in the United States. They state: “The steadily increasing percentage of young adults who report being shy (from the earlier 40% to the current nearly 50% level) may be analyzed as negative acculturation to a confluence of social forces operating in the United States. We maintain that this rise in shyness is accompanied by spreading social isolation within a cultural context of indifference to others and a lowered priority given to being sociable, or in learning the complex network of skills necessary to be socially competent. A number of interacting social, technological, and economic processes are operating to reduce daily, ordinary, "real time" face-to-face interactions with other people. This lessened frequency of shared social experiences means that young people may not be learning the complex verbal and non-verbal language of social interaction. Without observing models engaging in pleasurable interactions, and without regularly practicing in this social exchange medium, there is a failure to develop adequate social skills, an awkwardness when having to interact with others, and thus a lowered priority for doing so. In addition to the failure to develop social skills, there seems to be an emerging reduction in emotional exchanges that promote intimacy, and in social sharing that promotes reciprocity.”

Watching kids today it is obvious that they are more interested in playing on their play stations rather than go outside and play with their neighbors. The big argument here is that kids are not safe outdoors like they were in days gone by. When these kids do get
together they choose to fight each other in some surreal game that allows them to destroy each other with no ramifications. In ignoring the importance of socialization in our society it is no wonder that children today are de-sensitized to violence.

The authors go on to say that, “The new Cyberspace generation of the nineties may be seen as an accretion on the TV generation that fostered passive, often isolated viewing of television for many hours a day. The use of video games, CD-rom games and stories, web surfing, email, and other technological marvels all obviate the need to take time to seek out direct contact with other people for fun, friendship or work exchanges. Indeed, social time is being replaced with nanosecond-based efficient exchange of information within a highly structured, externally imposed format.”

In my poster presentation I would like to explore the avenues that can be taken to encourage more social interaction in schools as technology becomes more prevalent in our society. I will explore various techniques such as Web-Quests, which encourage group interaction, assigning positions on projects similar to what they will find out in the working world when they become adults.