INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) AS TOOLS TO FACILITATE CULTURALLY SUPPORTIVE INSTRUCTION

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This session will generate discussion on the effectiveness of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in facilitating Culturally Supportive Instruction (CSI) in the classroom. In a such a classroom, “effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement” (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007).

The literature is replete with evidence of the need to provide students with a culturally supportive environment in order to facilitate achievement (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). In an increasingly diverse society where students in the classroom present different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, teachers are called on to adapt instruction to address a multitude of needs. To the extent that teachers can do so, they must find ways to “connect” with these students so that classroom instruction becomes an extension of home, rather than a rejection of home as is often the case with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers certainly cannot know all cultures, nor experience all backgrounds. Therefore, they must find other ways to “tap into” the home culture presented by their many students. ICT provides many tools that enable the teachers to (a) connect with persons outside of the school wall, (b) support the dynamic delivery of content and (d) design instructional activities that affirm individual and group work.

We will demonstrate that these latest emerging technologies make the challenge of providing culturally supportive instruction significantly easier. In this Roundtable Discussion, first, the concept of culturally supportive instruction will be explored, and its importance in promoting achievement among diverse learners. Second, some of the latest emerging ICT tools that can enhance the implementation of CSI will be reviewed. Finally, we will share case studies that illustrate the use of ICT in facilitating CSI. An annotated list of informative and interactive Web sites, and relevant software will be provided.

Some of the ICT tools to be reviewed include the following:
1. *iPad.* The iPad can be used to support collaboration, conduct research, prepare presentations, and communication.

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 knowledge about their respective cultural norms and behaviors.

4. *Electronic Databases.* Computers enable students to gather, manage, and analyze data electronically, facilitating the collection and manipulation of large volumes of information as they design their own problems.