CANADA'S SCHOOLNET

LEARNING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

SOCIAL ISSUES

WWW.SCHOOLNET.CA/SNAB/BROCHURE

Canada

Here are some issues and some questions to consider in planning and assessing the use of technology in classrooms, together with some web sites that can help in providing answers:

Networking computers in education provides unprecedented access to content and opportunities for communication. This access for K-12 students and teachers raises important social issues related to responsible, ethical and safe use of the Information Highway. SchoolNet and its partners in government, business, homes, and schools can work together in various ways to balance the benefits of free access to on-line information with the protection of children from inappropriate content and exploitation.

Quality and appropriateness of on-line content

Students need access to quality content in classroom learnware and on the Internet.
◆ Does the content match the learning needs and practices in the school?
◆ Does it comply with curriculum guidelines?
◆ Is it appropriate, inclusive, current, and relevant?

Respect for intellectual property, copyright

It is difficult to enforce copyright laws in the Internet environment.
◆ Are classroom practices consistent with current copyright law?
◆ Does the school promote understanding of laws, policies and guidelines?
(Canadian Educational Policy and Administration Network (CEPAN) at www.cepan.ca or Strategis at www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/ip00001e.html or Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) at www.cmec.ca/copyrght/copyrght.htm)

Protection of privacy

Schools need to protect the privacy of students and teachers.
◆ Do acceptable use policies include ways to manage on-line behaviour and promote respect for privacy of all on-line users?
◆ Are technological safeguards such as electronic surveillance, caching systems, personal portals in educational networks considered?
◆ Are procedures for storing student records and personal information electronically secure?
(Strategis at http://e-com.ic.gc.ca/english/privacy/632d1.html or Media Awareness Network at www.media-awareness.ca)

Language and culture

English is the predominant language on the Internet.
◆ Do students have access to inclusive educational resources that reflect Canadian diversity and identity?
◆ How can schools and their partners promote and contribute to development of content reflecting both official languages and Aboriginal people of Canada?
(Canada's Digital Collections at http://collections.ic.gc.ca or SchoolNet's Learning Resources www.schoolnet.ca/home/e/resources)

Supporting special needs learners

Networked technology increases opportunities for special needs learners.

◆ How is technology used to improve access to learning for special needs students?

◆ Does the school's technology enable regular communication between teachers, parents and child care specialists to co-ordinate their support?

◆ Do teachers and students have on-line access to learning resources designed for special needs students?

(Special Needs Education (SNE) at www.schoolnet.ca/sne or The Special Needs Opportunity Windows (SNOW) at http://snow.utoronto.ca)

Gender Equity

Female students use technology less than males although the Internet seems better matched to their learning styles.

◆ Are female students encouraged to use technology in their learning?

◆ What gender sensitive resources are available to increase female students' interest in technology for learning or as a possible career?

(Girls Are IT at www.girlsareit.com/intro.html)

Responsible use of the Internet

Students using the Internet at school sometimes use the technology irresponsibly or access inappropriate materials accidentally or on purpose.

◆ Does the school follow acceptable use policies to manage appropriate access and ensure responsible use of technology?

◆ Do students, teachers and parents have opportunities to discuss media awareness as part of the school's curriculum?

(Stellar at www.stellar.nf.ca/sssp/atschool.html)

Business/Education Partnerships

The Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Teachers Federation have established guidelines to assist schools and businesses to develop ethical and effective partnerships.

◆ Is the school developing partnerships consistent with these guidelines?

(Conference Board of Canada at www2.conferenceboard.ca or Canadian Teachers Federation www.ctf-fce.ca)

This brochure is one of five describing the activities of the Working Groups of the SchoolNet National Advisory Board. Through the efforts of Industry Canada's SchoolNet, a collaborative initiative of federal, provincial and territorial governments, the private sector and the education community, Canada became the first nation in the world, on March 30, 1999, to connect its schools and public libraries to the Information Highway. SchoolNet is part of Connecting Canadians, the Government of Canada's strategy to keep Canada among world leaders in connecting its citizens to the Internet. The other brochures in this series are Connectivity, Professional Development, Research and Measurement.

To obtain additional brochures, the full research report on social issues or more information on Canada's SchoolNet, visit www.schoolnet.ca or contact:

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