Digital Divide

R531

Computers in Education

Written by:

Sandra J. Jones

Indiana University Southeast

February 15, 2013

I recall hearing the term digital divide several years ago on a television news program. I immediately thought of a generational gap among the youth and elderly’s knowledge and skills of computers. The news segment went on to report about the economic inequalities of owning a computer and having access to the internet. Since viewing this news report, I realize the digital divide continues to grow among the lower socioeconomic class. However, I was surprised to learn of the vast geographic inequalities that still exist in rural communities and the southern states. I was most surprised to learn the United States ranked 12th among developed nations for wired internet access. It is a disgrace to think the United States created the internet, yet there are countries like Portugal and Russia that will soon have more advanced fiber-optic networks than we do (Crawford, 2011).

The digital divide is having a deep impact on the classroom. More teachers are assigning homework that requires access to the internet (Brunner, 2013). The inequalities among students that have internet access and those who do not will only continue to rise. As educators, we need to consider these facts before assigning homework. But more importantly, we need to advocate for all students to have equal access at school as well as home. Teachers can help by writing grants for school laptop computers to be used at home or creating initiatives with local government or businesses to support greater access.

Technology can empower all learners with diverse backgrounds, characteristics, abilities, and affirm diversity through a vast array of digital materials. There are endless amounts of technology resources that support creative thinking, problem solving, support differentiated instruction, and explore diversity. “One of the most empowering uses of digital tools occurs when teachers possess the skills to identify, develop, and apply technology to recognize and validate the diverse backgrounds of their students” (Kingsley, 2007).

I was surprised to watch the YouTube video regarding fair use and copyright laws. Copyright laws are very strict, but after watching this video, it is a little confusing. I have learned there are some grey areas regarding some copyrighted information in certain circumstances. There seems to be some flexibility with teaching and uses in the classroom.

References

Brunner, H. (2013, January 29). Equal internet access is a k-12 must-have. *Education Week*,

Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/01/30/19brunner.h32.html?tkn=VSCFx6Zy2335k5Lgm+KKAjimft6fzv6UJZEy&cmp=clp-sb-edtech>

Crawford, S. (2011, December 3). The new digital divide. *The New York Times Sunday Review*

*The Opinion Pages*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/opinion/sunday/internet-access-and-the-new-divide.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&>

Kingsley, K. (2007, September). Empower diverse learners with educational technology and

digital media. *Interventions in School and Clinic*, *Vol. 43*, 52-56. Retrieved from

<http://at08.wikispaces.com/file/view/Empower+Diverse+Learners+With+Educational+Tech+and+Digital+Media.pdf>