

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

Connecting Education with Technology - for Everyone

A guide for educators who want to integrate e-mail and the Internet into their classroom or project

The toolkit points educators to free, high quality resources that help address the digital divide in the classroom and community. The toolkit, edited by Joy Wallace, senior associate at the National Institute for Community Innovations, is made possible in part through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's PT3 (Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to use Technology) and Technology Innovation Challenge Grant programs. We are committed to continually enhancing the toolkit's contents; therefore, you may want to consider revisiting the toolkit at least monthly as new resources are added each week. To get the most recent version of the Toolkit, please go to [www.nici-mc2.org/de\\_toolkit/pages/print.htm](http://www.nici-mc2.org/de_toolkit/pages/print.htm). Printed copies of the toolkit have been made available through funding generously provided by the AOL Time Warner Foundation, a leader in bridging the digital divide.

## What is the "digital divide", and why should educators care?

According to the Benton Foundation:

*There has always been a gap between those people and communities who can make effective use of information technology and those who cannot. Now, more than ever, unequal adoption of technology excludes many from reaping the fruits of the economy.*

*We use the term "digital divide" to refer to this gap between those who can effectively use new information and communication tools, such as the Internet, and those who cannot. While a consensus does not exist on the extent of the divide (and whether the divide is growing or narrowing), researchers are nearly unanimous in acknowledging that some sort of divide exists.*

## What is "digital equity"?

Digital equity is the social-justice goal of ensuring that everyone in our society has equal access to technology tools, computers and the Internet. Even more, it is when all individuals have the knowledge and skills to access and *use* technology tools, computers and the Internet.

This **Digital Equity Toolkit** is a guide for educators who want to integrate e-mail and the Internet into their classroom or project.

According to recent research by the National Center for Educational Statistics, 98% of schools and 77% of instructional rooms have computers and are connected to the Internet. But many classrooms and important educational projects are *not* connected, and these educators are deprived of excellent Internet-based resources.

Most important, even though a school or classroom may be connected, the technology may not be used by students — leaving many young people technology-illiterate, without key skills they need to succeed in today's job market.

If you would like to suggest resources to be added to the Digital Equity Toolkit, please send them to [nici@nici-mc2.org](mailto:nici@nici-mc2.org).

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## **What can this “tool kit” do for educators (and others)?**

Digital Equity Tool Kit answers these questions:

- 1. How can I learn more about the digital divide?**
- 2. Where can I find inexpensive computers?**
- 3. Where can I get free Internet service?**
- 4. Where can I get free e-mail?**
- 5. How can I get affordable Internet service for my school?**
- 6. What resources are available to build digital equity?**
- 7. What are community technology centers, and how can they help?**
- 8. How do I use the Internet?**
- 9. What about help for teachers to learn to use technology in the classroom?**
- 10. What about digital equity for persons with disabilities?**
- 11. Where can people use computers in their community?**
- 12. What about sources of Internet-based curricula?**
- 13. What if I have more questions that need answers?**

To make the most use of this Toolkit, you need access to a computer, with a modem that’s connected to a telephone line. If your computer is not connected to the Internet, you will need to set up an account with an Internet service provider, or gain access to another computer that is connected to the Internet. (You may want to check out the sections, “Where Can I Get Free Internet Service?” and “Where Can People Use Computers in the Community?”)

Every Internet-based resource described in this toolkit has an Internet address. For instance, typing the address [www.nici-mc2.org](http://www.nici-mc2.org) into your Internet browser will take you to the website of the National Institute for Community Innovations — the sponsor of this toolkit.

If you are seeking to build digital equity for your students, we hope this toolkit will be helpful. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the Digital Equity Toolkit, please contact editor Joy Wallace at [jwallace@nici-mc2.org](mailto:jwallace@nici-mc2.org), or (503) 284-2613.

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## 1. How can I learn more about the digital divide?

The *digital divide* is the gap between those educational institutions that integrate technology into education, and those that do not have access to this technology — or don't have the knowledge and skills to put it to the fullest use.

Here is a partial list of resources that help define and make sense of this problem:

The Digital Divide Network serves as a clearinghouse that offers information about efforts to provide all Americans with access to the Internet and other information technologies, as well as reports and information about the digital divide.

**[www.digitaldividenetwork.org](http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org)**

Produced by the Public Broadcasting Service, the site "Digital Divide" reports on the role that computers play in widening the social gaps in our society, particularly among young people. By providing equitable and meaningful access to technology, we can ensure that all children step into the 21st century together. This site looks at education, workplace, gender and race issues.

**[www.pbs.org/digitaldivide](http://www.pbs.org/digitaldivide)**

Hosted by the University of Virginia, "A Multicultural Education Examination of the Digital Divide," by Paul Gorski, examines the differences in access to technology among groups from a multicultural, multiracial and gender perspective.

**[curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/net/digdiv.html](http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/net/digdiv.html)**

Since October 1996, the Technology Access Foundation has been leading a movement to close the digital divide. TAF collaborates with community and corporate partners to create programs that teach kids not only to be users of technology, but also to be providers of content and technological creators.

**[www.techaccess.org](http://www.techaccess.org)**

## 2. Where can I find inexpensive computers?

Purchasing the hardware you need for day-to-day technology needs, including e-mail and Internet connection is an important decision. There are sources of inexpensive or even free computers, but first assess your technology needs, including personal preferences and skill level, as well as how you want to use the technology. Remember that inexpensive and free hardware also comes at a price, so consider carefully what will work best for you, your school or agency.

The first step is to assess your needs and make a decision. The article "A Simple Guide to Buying Computers" from TechSoup will help you get started.

**[www.techsoup.org/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=27&topicid=1](http://www.techsoup.org/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=27&topicid=1)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

Consistent Computer Bargains Non-Profits is an organization designed to provide non-profit organizations including colleges, faculty, students and K-12 schools with technology information and solutions to problems. They feature special prices on their website for hardware and software.

**[www.cbnonprofits.com](http://www.cbnonprofits.com)**

TechSoup offers nonprofits one-stop shopping for their technology needs. TechSoup is committed to leveraging its strength as a community-wide portal for the benefit of the entire community. They have compiled resource lists of non-profit discounts offered by hardware and software companies, and by technology assistance agencies.

**[www.techsoup.org/sub\\_npo\\_discounts.cfm](http://www.techsoup.org/sub_npo_discounts.cfm)**

Resources for Parents, Educators and Publishers (PEP) lists on their website organizations in each state that facilitate donations of used hardware for schools and community groups.

**[www.microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle/recycle\\_index.html](http://www.microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle/recycle_index.html)**

Computers for Learning is a program that transfers excess government computer equipment to schools and educational non-profit organizations. One must show eligibility and register needs, then Computers for Learning will determine if they can help you.

**[www.computers.fed.gov/school/user.asp](http://www.computers.fed.gov/school/user.asp)**

Gifts In Kind International partners with business and non-profits to provide quality product and services that improve lives in communities around the world. Businesses donate products (including technology) and Gifts In Kind gives the products away to registered non-profits.

**[www.giftsinkind.org](http://www.giftsinkind.org)**

The National Cristina Foundation (NCF) provides computer technology and solutions to give people with disabilities, students at risk and economically disadvantaged persons the opportunity, through training, to lead more independent and productive lives. NCF works to ensure that used computer technology resources that no longer meet an enterprise's needs are given a second productive life as a tool for developing human potential.

**[www.cristina.org](http://www.cristina.org)**

PC Connection is an on-line technology “super store.” You must be willing to shop with a credit card, but prices are very competitive.

**[www.pcconnection.com](http://www.pcconnection.com)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## **3. Where can I get free Internet service?**

To use e-mail or gain access to the resources on the Internet, you must have an account with an Internet service provider, or ISP. Most ISPs, like AOL, AT&T Broadband, Qwest Net, and Compuserv, expect you to pay a monthly charge for their service.

However, there are a few free ISPs. You can explore this option by visiting these sites.

Free Internet service provider:

**[www.metconnect.com/signup/56k.html](http://www.metconnect.com/signup/56k.html)**

Lists free Internet providers:

**[www.ispnut.com](http://www.ispnut.com)**

## **4. Where can I get free e-mail?**

The addresses below are for commercial services that provide free e-mail accounts. When you go to any of these Internet sites, you will find the words "Free E-mail Account" or something similar. Click on that phrase and follow the directions. Be aware that some free services offer limited support and may go out of business on short notice to users.

More options for free e-mail can be found by doing a search on your favorite search engine (see "What if I have more questions that need answers?").

**[www.address.com](http://www.address.com)**

**[www.dotnow.com](http://www.dotnow.com)**

**[www.netzero.com](http://www.netzero.com)**

**[www.juno.com](http://www.juno.com)**

**[mail.yahoo.com](http://mail.yahoo.com)**

**[mail.chek.com](http://mail.chek.com)**

**[www.eudoramail.com](http://www.eudoramail.com)**

**[www.iname.com](http://www.iname.com)**

**[login.mail.lycos.com](http://login.mail.lycos.com)**

**[www.another.com](http://www.another.com)**

**[email.angelfire.mailcity.lycos.com](http://email.angelfire.mailcity.lycos.com)**

**[www.1freemail.com](http://www.1freemail.com)**

**[www.afreeinternet.com](http://www.afreeinternet.com)**

**[lc3.law5.hotmail.passport.com/cgi-bin/login](http://lc3.law5.hotmail.passport.com/cgi-bin/login)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## 5. How can I get affordable Internet service for my school?

The federally funded Schools and Libraries program, also called "E-Rate," helps to make technology such as phone service and the Internet affordable for American schools and libraries. Eligible schools and libraries receive discounts on telephone service, Internet access, and internal connections (network wiring) within school and library buildings. The discounts range from 20% to 90%, depending on the household income level of students in the community, and on whether the school or library is located in an urban or a rural area.

To take advantage of E-Rate, schools and libraries must develop an approved technology plan that demonstrates the relationship between the information technology to be supported and the school's curriculum or library objectives. The school or library then provides notice that it seeks services, and vendors bid for the contract. After the school or library selects a vendor, services may be ordered. The vendor uses federal funds under the program to provide these services at discounted prices.

Some schools find that trying to get the E-Rate and using it are burdensome, so be prepared for red tape.

E-Rate is administered, and technology plans are approved, by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), a private, non-profit corporation that is responsible for providing every U.S. state and territory with access to affordable telecommunication services through the federal Universal Service Fund. A "Service Provider Manual" is available on-line.

To learn more, go to:

**[www.sl.universalservice.org](http://www.sl.universalservice.org)**

To find out how schools and libraries in your area are benefiting from the Schools and Libraries program, follow the prompts to "Funding Commitments."

To read the Federal Communications Network's description of E-Rate, go to:

**[www.fcc.gov/learnnet](http://www.fcc.gov/learnnet)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## **6. What resources are available to build digital equity?**

There are some excellent resources (organizations and agencies) that focus attention on “digital equity.” Resources include other tool kits, list-servs and links to information.

The Benton Foundation works to realize the social benefits made possible by the public use of communications. Bridging the worlds of philanthropy, public policy and community action, Benton Foundation seeks to shape the emerging communications environment and to demonstrate the value of communications for solving social problems. The foundation’s comprehensive website provides information and news about the digital divide and highlights resources, including list-servs (on-line forums) that discuss the issue.

**[www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org)**

"Connect for Kids" is the Benton Foundation's on-line action and information center for adults who want to make their communities better for children. This site offers up-to-date information about what's happening in your state, and how you can make a difference close to home.

**[www.connectforkids.org](http://www.connectforkids.org)**

The ConnectNet/Connectado Campaign is a bi-lingual collaboration between nonprofits, civil rights groups industry and government to help Americans to find technology resources near them. Powered by the largest database of community technology centers, the ConnectNet.org website provides maps, PSAs and a toll-free number with 24hour staffing to ensure that technology resources are available to all.

**[www.connectnet.org](http://www.connectnet.org)**

The U.S. Dept. of Education publishes a toolkit for community leaders, government staff, business leaders and local volunteers. It gives basic tips on how to bridge the digital divide by developing a community technology project.

**[www.ed.gov/Technology/tool\\_kit.html](http://www.ed.gov/Technology/tool_kit.html)**

The National Institute for Community Innovations offers a Digital Equity Portal full of on-line resources for educators to increase digital equity. Resources are organized by five dimensions of digital equity.

**[www.digital-equity.org](http://www.digital-equity.org)**

This site offers resources that have been compiled by Bonnie Bracey, an outstanding technology educator working for the George Lucas Foundation. Lists and links include resources, articles, people and projects that can help increase digital equity.

**[www.edu-cyberpg.com/Teachers/digitaldivide.html](http://www.edu-cyberpg.com/Teachers/digitaldivide.html)**

The Department of Commerce's Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) promotes the widespread availability and use of digital network technologies in the public and non-profit sectors. As part of the Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, TOP gives grants for model projects that demonstrate innovative uses of network technologies. TOP then evaluates and shares the lessons learned from these

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

projects, to ensure that their benefits are distributed across the country — especially in rural and underserved communities.

**[www.ntia.doc.gov/otiahome/top/whoweare/briefhistory.htm](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/otiahome/top/whoweare/briefhistory.htm)**

Launched in November 1999, PowerUP has brought together dozens of non-profit organizations, major corporations, and state and federal government agencies to help America's underserved youth acquire the skills, experiences and resources they need to succeed in the digital age. The project works with non-profits that are developing programs consistent with PowerUP's goals.

**[www.powerup.org](http://www.powerup.org)**

Powered by CompuMentor, one of the nation's oldest and largest non-profit technology assistance agencies, TechSoup.org offers non-profit organizations one-stop shopping to meet their technology needs.

**[www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org)**

The concept of *universal design* says that products and services should be usable by as many people as possible, regardless of disability, language barriers or other challenges. A good place to start learning about this is at the Trace Center.

**[www.trace.wisc.edu/world](http://www.trace.wisc.edu/world)**

The World Wide Web Consortium is engaged in a project to help people understand the importance of accessibility in Web pages, and to develop standards on how to make sure the pages that are written are accessible. These guidelines and other information can be found at:

**[www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI)**

CenterAWARE stands for Accessible Web Authoring Resources and Education. Its mission is to serve as a central resource for Web authors who wish to learn about Web accessibility.

**[aware.hwg.org](http://aware.hwg.org)**

## **7. What are Community Technology Centers, and how can they help?**

The Community Technology Centers program of the U.S. Dept. of Education promotes the development of model programs that demonstrate the educational effectiveness of technology in urban and rural areas and economically distressed communities.

Community technology centers provide children and adults with access to information technology and related learning services. CTCs can be invaluable sources of information and technical assistance for educators, students, and students' families in low-income communities and neighborhoods.

**[www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTC/](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTC/)**

To find out which Community Technology Center is closest to you, visit the map on this website:

**[www.ctcnet.org](http://www.ctcnet.org)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

"Community Technology Centers: Impact on Individual Participants and Their Communities" identifies and categorizes CTCs' wide range of individual and community impacts.

**[www.ctcnet.org/eval.html](http://www.ctcnet.org/eval.html)**

One exciting example of a community technology center is GoGo Surfer, located in an old Woolworth's store in the heart of Bridgeton, N.J. With a restaurant, shopping, and a free Internet cafe with ten on-line computers, GoGo Surfer offers a new kind of family entertainment experience.

**[www.gogosurfer.com](http://www.gogosurfer.com)**

Produced by the Children's Partnership, this resource helps community organizations to find out what is working at the state level and in local cities around the country. It includes state-by-state examples and case studies of how technology is working to bridge the digital divide.

**[www.techpolicybank.org](http://www.techpolicybank.org)**

## **8. How do I use the Internet?**

The Internet is such an immense source of information that it can be intimidating and overwhelming. It is easy to "get lost" in cyberspace ... or at least feel lost. Through practice a person gets used to surfing, searching and seeking on the Internet. The following resources are designed to introduce the Internet to the newcomer, and make using the Internet more comfortable and organized.

The Internet is all about information. This site is dedicated to helping people learn to use that information in a coherent manner. "Beginners' Central" is based on a chapter-by-chapter structure, where any chapter can be accessed at any time. A helpful tool for brand new Internet users.

**[www.northernwebs.com/bc](http://www.northernwebs.com/bc)**

Hosted by the Boston Public Library, "Internet Tutorials" contains four excellent resources for learning how to maneuver on the Internet: Exploring the World Wide Web; Internet Schoolhouse; HelpWeb: A guide to getting started on the Internet; and clnet - Internet Glossary.

**[www.bpl.org/kids/Internettutorials.htm](http://www.bpl.org/kids/Internettutorials.htm)**

"Why we need to evaluate what we find on the Internet" provides an easy, usable structure for analyzing the credibility and reliability of information and sources found on the Internet.

**[thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/~techman/eval.html](http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/~techman/eval.html)**

"Evaluate your Web source" provides a fill-in form for analyzing websites and the information they present. After filling in the form, it can be printed.

**[www.csd99.k12.il.us/north/library/Research/evaluate.htm](http://www.csd99.k12.il.us/north/library/Research/evaluate.htm)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

This tutorial presents the substance of Internet Workshops offered year-round by the Teaching Library at the University of California at Berkeley. It includes “chapters” on What is the Internet?; Things to know; Recommended search strategy; Search tools; Evaluating Web pages; and Glossary of Internet and Web Jargon.

**[www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html)**

This is a very comprehensive “Internet Tutorial” with many helpful “chapters” on relevant topics for using the Internet as an effective tool.

**[library.albany.edu/internet](http://library.albany.edu/internet)**

## **9. How can teachers get help in learning to use technology in the classroom?**

"When effectively integrated into curriculum, technology tools can extend learning in powerful ways," says Bonnie Bracey of the Lucas Foundation. The Internet and multimedia, she notes, can provide students and teachers with:

- Access to current primary source materials.
- Ways of collaborating with students, teachers and experts around the world.
- Opportunities to express understanding through images, sound and text.

In addition, using computers and the Internet in school enable students to develop important skills that many, if not most, will need in their future careers.

The American Library Association’s “ICONnect” provides a variety of free on-line courses that offer skills to navigate the Web and use search engines effectively; courses that help educators grapple with issues raised by Internet use in the classroom; and courses that offer ways to integrate Internet resources into the curriculum.

**[www.ala.org/ICONN/onlineco.html](http://www.ala.org/ICONN/onlineco.html)**

Learn how libraries around the country can help educators learn about the Internet at "Libraries, Children and the Internet: Questions and Answers from American Library Association."

**[www.ala.org/parents/librariesandinternet.html](http://www.ala.org/parents/librariesandinternet.html)**

Hosted by the University of Oregon, the “Netizen” site offers strategies to assist young people in gaining the knowledge, decision-making skills, motivation and self-control to behave in a safe, responsible, legal and ethical manner when using the Internet and other information technologies.

**[netizen.uoregon.edu](http://netizen.uoregon.edu)**

NetDayCompass.org is a comprehensive education-technology site, designed for technology decision-makers in K-12 schools.

**[www.netdaycompass.org](http://www.netdaycompass.org)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

The George Lucas Education Foundation provides links to schools, teachers, communities and projects that are effectively integrating technology into the classroom.  
**[www.glef.org](http://www.glef.org)**

"4Teachers" provides on-line discussion and sharing space for teachers integrating technology into education. The site also describes models of successful programs, and provides information on resource people, curriculum, professional development opportunities, policy and planning tools, and the "site of the week." Hosted by High Plains Regional Technology in the Education Consortium at the University of Kansas.  
**[4teachers.org](http://4teachers.org)**

The National Education Association's technology site offers a Message Board, links to teachers and schools that are making technology news, Technology Briefs, a place to ask an expert questions about technology in education, links to educational resources sites, and a list of technology-related events.  
**[www.nea.org/cet](http://www.nea.org/cet)**

Encarta offers guidelines for keeping students safe while using the Internet.  
**[encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse/safety.asp](http://encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse/safety.asp)**

This free monthly in-service magazine program shows teachers the tools and equipment they need to be "Net-wise." Features the latest educational Web tools and sites, as well as 27 "Net Classrooms" where teachers seamlessly integrate the Internet into their curricula.  
**[www.netfiles.org](http://www.netfiles.org)**

"E-mail for the Classroom Teacher" helps answer the question "why would a teacher want to use e-mail?" This website looks at the answer to that question in two parts: from a personal, professional perspective, and from the perspective of what students can do with e-mail.  
**[www.cln.org/int\\_email.html](http://www.cln.org/int_email.html)**

The Virtual Volunteering Project refers to volunteers with particular skills or expertise to assist staff or other volunteers as technical assistance volunteers. This website provides guidance to recruiting and utilizing online volunteers.  
**[www.serviceleader.org/vv/findta.html](http://www.serviceleader.org/vv/findta.html)**

This website provides students, teachers and other members of the learning community instruction in selecting relevant, appropriate, and credible sources from the vast amount of information available through the Internet.  
**[www.ala.org/ICONN/evaluate.html](http://www.ala.org/ICONN/evaluate.html)**

"Internet Keypal Exchange" is designed to aid teachers who are looking for Internet keypal (like a pen-pal only via e-mail) exchanges for their classes. The site identifies keypal resources for matching classes of students together.  
**[www.cln.org/int\\_keypals.html](http://www.cln.org/int_keypals.html)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

“Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators” provides a series of evaluation surveys, one each at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels, to help students critically evaluate a Web page for authenticity, applicability, authorship, bias, and usability. [school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html](http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html)

Activities, such as "Treasure Hunts," that can get you started using the Internet to achieve a purpose, and moving from one Web site to another. [www.cyberbee.com](http://www.cyberbee.com)

## **10. What about digital equity for persons with disabilities?**

Assistive technology is defined by Federal legislation as any item, piece of equipment, or product system—whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized—that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of an individual with a disability. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that specialized software and assistive technology be considered for students with disabilities. According to the IDEA Amendments of 1997, pupil evaluation teams are now required to consider whether students need assistive technology.

Universal design in education (UDE) means that physical, social, and learning environments are designed so that individuals with a wide range of abilities can have meaningful access to and participation in general education. UDE is built-in and involves flexibility of materials, strategies, approaches and technology. Universal design guides developers, educators, users and others in developing and implementing environments that support diverse users, regardless of their abilities.

Access to the World Wide Web can present significant barriers to learning for persons with disabilities. For example, students who are blind are unable to view graphics, and students who are deaf are unable to hear audio content. Students with learning disabilities may be unable to read text, comprehend the organization of a website or may be distracted by changing images. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires federal departments and agencies that develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology, including computers, software, networks, and peripherals, to ensure that the technology allows federal employees and members of the public with disabilities to have access to information and data. This access must be comparable to that available to the nondisabled public.

GENASYS promotes the preparation of future teachers who can teach ALL students by stimulating catalyst and implementation grantees and existing professional and governmental networks to integrate and apply knowledge of web accessibility, assistive technology, specialized software, and universally designed curriculum. <http://genasys.usm.maine.edu/index.htm>

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

The Americans with Disabilities Act Technical Assistance Program is a comprehensive resource for information on the ADA. Funding for this site comes from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.

**[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)**

CAST is a not-for-profit organization that uses technology to expand opportunities for all people, including those with disabilities. It provides resources such as professional development, articles about research, curriculum, information about tools and examples of current practice.

**[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)**

ALLTech is a national center that provides training, consultation and technical assistance in the areas of assistive technology, specialized software, Web accessibility and universal design in curriculum.

**[alltech.usm.maine.edu](http://alltech.usm.maine.edu)**

The Trace Center provides information about universal design

**[www.trace.wisc.edu/world](http://www.trace.wisc.edu/world)**

Maine Educational Center for Assistive Technology and Software (MECATS) provides information, technical assistance, and professional development about assistive technology, assistive and educational software, web accessibility, and universally designed curriculum.

**[mecats.usm.maine.edu/](http://mecats.usm.maine.edu/)**

Section508 is the federal government website that provides information to federal agencies and the public about implementation of Section 508.

**[www.section508.gov](http://www.section508.gov)**

World Wide Web Consortium: Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), in coordination with organizations around the world, pursues accessibility of the web through five primary areas of work: technology, guidelines, tools, education and outreach, and research and development.

**[www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI)**

Equal Access to Software and Information (EASI) is a nationally recognized provider of online training on accessible information technologies, including web accessibility, for persons with disabilities.

**[www.rit.edu/~easi](http://www.rit.edu/~easi)**

The National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) is a research and development facility dedicated to the issues of media and information technology for people with disabilities in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

**[ncam.wgbh.org](http://ncam.wgbh.org)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

## 11. Where can people use computers in their community?

Even if all classrooms magically get Internet access and all teachers integrate technology into their lessons, not all students have access to computers and the Internet at home. In almost every community though, public libraries are one common source of access to computers and the Internet. Below are additional sources of information about community access to computers and the Internet.

Type in your zip code on this site, and a map will appear that shows where computers are available for public use.

**[www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/sections/index.cfm](http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/sections/index.cfm)**

This site explores the links to 30 community-based technology access projects, mainly located in the Northwest, that have been funded by the Gates Foundation.

**[www.gatesfoundation.org/learning/publicinfoaccess/grantlist\\_cat.asp](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/learning/publicinfoaccess/grantlist_cat.asp)**

Launched in 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Through private/public partnerships, Neighborhood Networks establishes multi-service community technology centers that bring digital opportunity and lifelong learning to residents of insured and assisted housing. More than 800 Neighborhood Networks centers are operating in HUD multifamily housing properties throughout the United States, including Puerto Rico.

**[www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwaboutnn.html](http://www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwaboutnn.html)**

Boys' and Girls' Clubs of America is providing its clubs with the tools to make members and staff effective technology users. Through gifts from Microsoft, each club will receive a comprehensive package of software, hardware and workshops. To find the Boys' and Girls' Club nearest you, visit:

**[www.bgca.org/clubs](http://www.bgca.org/clubs)**

## 12. What about sources of Internet-based curricula?

Many excellent Web sites are designed to help educators integrate the Internet into classroom experiences. Below are resources for accessing lessons, content and theme units, classroom activities, and models for developing lessons.

MarcoPolo provides educators with high-quality Internet curriculum-content and professional-development opportunities. This site includes dynamic lesson plans that are aligned with national standards and feature links to educational resources, educational materials sorted by grade level, and free training on how to use MarcoPolo. MarcoPolo's exemplary instructional units and activities are developed by teams of master teachers in collaboration with the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, National Geographic Society, National Council on Economic Education, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and American Association for the Advancement of Science.

**[www.wcom.com/marcopolo](http://www.wcom.com/marcopolo)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

"Ask ERIC," from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology at Syracuse University, offers links to Internet sites, educational organizations, and electronic discussion groups, with over 3,000 resources on a variety of educational issues.

**[ericir.syr.edu](http://ericir.syr.edu)**

ERIC also provides a set of guidelines to help teachers develop well-balanced lessons.

**[ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/Guide.shtml](http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/Guide.shtml)**

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the "Gateway to Educational Materials" (GEM) is a consortium effort to provide access to the substantial, but uncataloged, collections of Internet-based educational materials that are available on various federal, state, university, non-profit and commercial Internet sites.

**[geminfo.org/index.html](http://geminfo.org/index.html)**

To create an enjoyable experience for the teacher who is learning to use the Internet, the "Busy Teachers' Website K-12" provides direct source materials, lesson plans and classroom activities with a minimum of site-to-site linking.

**[www.ceismc.gatech.edu/busyt/homepg.htm](http://www.ceismc.gatech.edu/busyt/homepg.htm)**

This site is an on-line directory of free teacher-generated lesson plans for K-12 teachers. Many subjects are covered, including math, science, social studies, technology and more. Select a category and choose from a variety of featured lessons.

**[www.forlessonplans.com](http://www.forlessonplans.com)**

Encarta offers a large collection of lesson plans for 12 content areas, including "Special Topics." Find lessons by subject, grade level or keywords.

**[encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse/default.asp](http://encarta.msn.com/schoolhouse/default.asp)**

Global SchoolNet partners with schools, communities and businesses to provide collaborative learning activities that prepare students for the workforce and help them become responsible citizens. For two decades, the Global SchoolNet Foundation (GSN) has been demonstrating and promoting international on-line collaborative learning.

**[www.globalschoolnet.org](http://www.globalschoolnet.org)**

At Ohio State University, the U.S. Department of Education funds the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC), a huge database of science and mathematics education resources. This site provides curriculum resources, professional development opportunities, Web links and documents. Also, its monthly listing of the "Digital Dozen" points educators to Web sites that contain excellent mathematics and/or science material. Its current and archived listings of Digital Dozen resources are very useful.

**[www.enc.org](http://www.enc.org)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

Microsoft offers a series of themed lessons designed to help students communicate and collaborate by using new Microsoft technologies and the Internet. Each lesson is grade- and subject-specific, and includes a teaching guide and student activities that will make using computers more effective and more fun.

**[www.microsoft.com/education/?ID=ClassProductivity](http://www.microsoft.com/education/?ID=ClassProductivity)**

This site provides a guide to volunteer programs that use e-mail contacts to help students master challenging math, science and technology. It also lists numerous examples of on-line mentor programs that are available to educators.

**[www.ed.gov/pubs/emath/](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/emath/)**

Comprehensive resources for developing on-line lessons.

**[www.learningspace.org/teach\\_learn/lplan/rlesson.htm](http://www.learningspace.org/teach_learn/lplan/rlesson.htm)**

The heart of the AOL@SCHOOL system is a series of six online learning portals designed for grades K-2, 3-5, middle school, high school, teachers, and administrators. The student portals provide an easy-to-navigate environment in which students can access Web sites that have been chosen by educators as the best educational content for that grade level. Additionally, the student portals provide a suite of functional online tools such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, a calculator, and many other research and collaboration tools. The specially designed portals for teachers and administrators provide professional development and administrative help and resources, as well as the ability to search for subject and age-specific lesson plans.

**[www.aolatschool.com](http://www.aolatschool.com)**

The “Project Center” is a place to find or share collaborative classroom projects for use over the Internet. Subject areas include reading and language arts; social studies; mathematics; and science.

**[www.eduplace.com/projects/index.html](http://www.eduplace.com/projects/index.html)**

A specific kind of Internet-based lesson is a “WebQuest.” This site provides an example of a WebQuest where the purpose is to introduce the learner to the Food Guide Pyramid and food labels.

**[www.cyberbee.com/foodquest.html](http://www.cyberbee.com/foodquest.html)**

### **13. What if I have more questions that need answers?**

You can find sources of answers to all sorts of questions by using “search engines.” Search engines on the Internet use key words that you type in to scour the Net for other sites on which those words appear. Search engines are free services. Here are some search engines you can use to research questions or find appropriate resources:

“Ask Jeeves” invites you to enter a question, and it will find answers.

**[www.ask.com](http://www.ask.com)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

Yahoo.com provides a category-based Web directory.

**[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)**

Google is a simple, excellent, speedy search engine.

**[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)**

Excite.com is a global media company that offers consumers and advertisers comprehensive Internet navigation services with extensive personalization options. Search services include the Excite and WebCrawler brands.

**[www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com)**

Altavista is a Web and newsgroup search engine.

**[www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)**

Lycos offers users a point-and-click interface, pulldown menus, and the ability to use plain English terminology for constructing searches.

**[hotbot.lycos.com](http://hotbot.lycos.com)**

This comprehensive, searchable, categorized index includes reviews of over 17,000 educational and reference websites.

**[www.studyweb.com](http://www.studyweb.com)**

Zeal.com is a user-contributed, user-maintained Web directory, with ratings and reviews of resources.

**[www.zeal.com](http://www.zeal.com)**

Categorized index.

**[www.webcrawler.com](http://www.webcrawler.com)**

Searchable, category-based Web directory.

**[www.looksmart.com](http://www.looksmart.com)**

Extensive network of sites by subject specialists who write articles, host discussions, publish free e-mail newsletters and provide personally reviewed links for each topic.

**[www.about.com](http://www.about.com)**

Searchable, category-based Web directory.

**[www.hounddog.com](http://www.hounddog.com)**

Designed for educational research, this site is a collection of books, articles and software that are reviewed and can be searched.

**[www.noodletools.com](http://www.noodletools.com)**

A rich source of information – includes primary sources such as atlas and almanac, plus information about topics such as mathematics, news and sports.

**[www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)**

# The Digital Equity Toolkit

Labeled "The School Technology Portal," this site includes a monthly newsletter, a search engine for key words, and other resources to help administrators, teachers and others integrate technology into the classroom.

**[www.eschoolnews.com](http://www.eschoolnews.com)**

“Web Searching, Sleuthing, and Sifting” is a series of tutorials addressing a range of search topics. Users who have no prior knowledge of how to locate information on the Web as well as searchers with advanced skills have found the lessons to be helpful.

**[www.thelearningsite.net/cyberlibrarian/searching/ismain.html#What's%20the%20Web%20and%20why%20can't%20I%20find%20what%20I](http://www.thelearningsite.net/cyberlibrarian/searching/ismain.html#What's%20the%20Web%20and%20why%20can't%20I%20find%20what%20I)**

## About the National Institute for Community Innovations

This Digital Equity Toolkit was developed by the National Institute for Community Innovations, or NICI ([www.nici-mc2.org](http://www.nici-mc2.org)) and was made possible in part through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's *PT3* (Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology) and *Technology Innovation Challenge Grant* programs.

The mission of the National Institute for Community Innovations is to foster local economic and social well-being through educational innovation, especially in economically distressed communities. NICI is committed to updating the Digital Equity Toolkit continuously, as a free resource for educators, professional developers and teacher-education faculty.

To find out more, please contact Bob McLaughlin, NICI's executive director, at [mclaughb@nici-mc2.org](mailto:mclaughb@nici-mc2.org) or (802) 223-0463.

Readers are welcome to reprint/copy the toolkit in any quantities for any noncommercial purpose, and do not need prior permission to do so, but are requested to please inform NICI when they make and distribute more than 25 copies as this will assist NICI in keeping track of such efforts to disseminate the toolkit. Please send such messages to [nici@nici-mc2.org](mailto:nici@nici-mc2.org). If you have questions or suggestions for additional resources for the Digital Equity Toolkit, please contact editor Joy Wallace at [jwallace@nici-mc2.org](mailto:jwallace@nici-mc2.org), or call (503) 284-2613