

Lowell Monke ("Charlotte's Webpage," September/October 2005) is right on to say that experience is a powerful teacher, and we should not overestimate the value of virtual experiences on a computer when students can have real experiences in schools. But the use of educational technology does not necessarily equal simple computer-aided instruction. The inherently social behaviors of students in an online environment, particularly one empowered with read-write web tools, can help students realize the precise goals Monke is championing in his article. If students are blogging, podcasting, helping write the Wikipedia, and interacting with others on a daily basis about ideas and topics that truly matter, they are being well prepared for the future.

We need to help children connect with each other and people in their communities, which can now be global as well as local. Students need to be creating historical artifacts by recording oral histories and publishing them as podcasts. What Monke does not seem to understand is that technology, if used appropriately, can serve as a bridge for children of all ages needing and wanting to better understand from their world directly.

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Mapping program for high schools, Homewaters uses geographic information system (GIS) software as a tool to uncover the wealth of data not readily available to teenagers through direct experience—information such as pollution sites, census information, and historical shoreline boundaries. By putting data into a visual format, GIS allows students to see the links between economics and equity, environment and development.

We also recognize the importance of direct experience, and therefore include neighborhood walks, community interviews, and ground truthing in our curriculum, yet through the use of technology we actually increase students' understanding of and connection to their community. As they prepare to become active citizens, students must learn not just through direct experience, but through the experience and knowledge of others. Homewaters uses computers to give students access to that information so

Homewaters

Project is an educational nonprofit in Seattle that views computers differently than Lowell Monke does in his article. In our Neighborhood Green

they can engage in their community, and contribute to it, in a positive way.

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LOWELL MONKE REPLIES: *What Todd Burley describes strikes me as just what teenagers should be doing—after a childhood steeped in firsthand experience. As teens, their inner connection to nature can be supported by the cold, abstract data they amass, rather than be replaced by it. Wesley Fryer's letter is more troubling. To say that online tools provide for social activity is like saying McDonald's food provides nutrition. Okay, a little, but there are much better ways to feed kids. I am constantly frustrated by good progressive educational ideas being tied to high technology as if, for example, oral histories cannot be done well unless they are podcast. Why not let the children discuss and present them to the local heritage center in a public ceremony before grateful elders, proud parents, and nervous teachers? Now there is a rich social activity that truly matters.*

In the review of David Bayles's *Notes on a Shared Landscape* (William Kittredge, September/October 2005), there is a very unfortunate misinterpretation. The photo of Lake Billy Chinook in central Oregon and the accompanying text paint a picture

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