To: World Class School Board  
From: Jayne Crawford, Educator  
Date: February 9, 2010  
Re: How to Bridge the Digital Divide

The accessibility the digital age affords is unfortunately not available to everyone. The digital divide refers to certain groups (people from low socio-economic households, with lower education, with disabilities, and minorities) who may not have access to technology (including computers and Internet use) nor the skills to use it. We cannot assume every person who does not have access to technology wants access, however as educators it is our responsibility to model and promote the advantages and opportunities the Internet can provide to enhance one’s life, especially the above group of people. The effects of such inequity for students can result in lack of confidence because of inadequate skills needed to use the Internet and other computers programs. Furthermore, parents with no computer skills are deprived of opportunities for self-improvement such as more education, better jobs, and higher incomes. This memo provides six resources that can help reduce digital inequity.

- It is critical to develop an awareness of technology and provide information to our community about the importance and place of technology in today’s society thus allowing students to have access not only at school, but also at home and in their communities. Community Technology Centers’ Network (CTCNet) is available to provide our community with resources and support to implement technology to those who need it.  
  http://www.ctcnet.org/  
- The Community MAR program provides refurbished computers to low-income families and schools. They can help establish equipment to families in need.  
  http://www.techsoup.org/mar/  
- Schools who don’t have administrators who are technologically skilled may not feel confident enough to promote a technologically thriving school. CASTLE helps prepare school administrators to lead their school to become a computer-based environment with ample resources for teachers and students. http://www.schooltechleadership.org/
Digital Equity Service Center provides leaders of the community as well as teachers expertise in setting up programs and curriculum to implement technology and its applications.  www.digitalequity.or

Edutopia is a great resource for schools. It gives examples of schools who have implemented technology into their teaching, and is a great source for teacher development as well as hands-on projects for the classroom.  www.edutopia.org

W3C provide scenarios of people with disabilities using the web. Teachers need to be sensitive and develop empathy for students who have impaired access to computers. Also Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) provides a wealth of resources and links to help people with disabilities

http://www.w3.org/WAI/EO/Drafts/PWD-Use-Web/Overview.html
http://www.w3.org/WAI/

All in all, we must not lose focus of our ultimate goal which is educating students to become productive citizens in today’s technologically-based society. Change does not happen overnight, however the sooner we start taking steps to support those people included in the digital divide, the more our students will have opportunities for success. By offering families low priced computers, providing training courses to teachers and parents, guiding administrators to become technologically confident, and supporting the community with ample resources, our school board can become successful in diminishing the digital divide.