In recent years, the investment in technology for K–12 public schools in the United States has grown astronomically. In 1998, the level of spending on education technology at the national level was estimated at over $5 billion. This grand shift toward a technology-driven model for education has raised many new questions and concerns for educational equity advocates. These include:

• Are traditionally underserved students receiving a fair or adequate share of technological resources in comparison with mainstream populations?
• Are teachers of these students receiving adequate training on the effective uses of educational technology?
• Are there specific uses of educational technology that are particularly effective for teaching traditionally underserved populations? If so, are they actually being employed for these students?
• Do these students have sufficient access to computers at home to aid their learning?

The current state of knowledge about the distribution and the effectiveness of educational technology is very weak, because of lack of funding for research and poor research techniques, among other factors. The collective data that we have seen so far does not justify any strong and far-reaching conclusions. The aim, then, is not to seek such conclusions but to scout out the existing terrain, to inform some of the decisions that educators are currently making, and to see where research has to go to acquire a better understanding of the issues involved.

Educators must consider what policies and practices they can adopt in the interim to ensure that students of all races and backgrounds are receiving access to technology in a way that benefits their learning.

Apart from the research questions of how technology access, by all its definitions, correlates with student achievement, there is the practical question of what educators should do currently to provide equal access and benefits for all students. Below are some recommendations that often appear in the literature on this topic:

At the District Level

• Provide the same equipment and course offerings to schools serving mostly low income children as are provided to schools serving mostly high income children.
• Provide the same equipment to schools serving mostly children of color as is provided to schools serving mostly White children.
• Ensure that students in schools with high numbers of students of color or low income students have an opportunity to use computers in the same way as students in schools with high numbers of White students or high income students.
• Seek out instructional software that meets the needs and interests of limited English speaking, ethnic minority, differently-abled and female students, namely software that shows both boys and girls from varying ethnic backgrounds in diverse roles, is available in more than one language, allows for different learning styles, accommodates varying...
At the School Level

- Provide opportunities for all students—including low income, low achieving, and ethnic minority students—to use computers for high level cognitive tasks (simulations and applications) as well as low level cognitive tasks (drill and practice).
- Allow all groups equitable access to the computer facilities before and after school and during other free time.
- Encourage all groups to use computers before and after school and during other free time.
- Educate all parents and guardians about the importance of technology skills for their children.
- Ensure an equitable representation of all groups of students in computer clubs.
- Require all students to demonstrate proficiency with computers and other technology.
- Ensure that no particular group of students is allowed to dominate computer use.
- Provide students with female and diverse racial and cultural role models in technology-based careers.
- Make efforts to counter negative labels like “computer nerd” or negative attitudes about computers.
- Take measures to accommodate students who do not have access to a computer or to the Internet at home.

Given the already wide disparities in achievement between mainstream students and students of color, the issue of equity in technology use must be addressed as technology is being infused into school curricula so the basic policies and structures governing technology access and use are equitable for all students.

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