Workshop Series: Bridging the Digital Divide

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__Introduction__

Technology has quickly found its way into many aspects of our lives. It creates learning opportunities that were unfathomable ten years ago. In our excitement to implement new and exciting technology, educators can oftentimes forget that not all students are entering the course with a profound technology background. Unfortunately, this can create inequalities amongst our students. Some may not have the means to experience technology that their peers are already well versed in using. This gap in technological experience gives students with familiarity with these tools an edge over their inexperienced peers. Many inexperienced students do not have the means to familiarize themselves with such technologies in advance of the class. The proposed three-part workshop series will address: what the digital divide is and who is affected by it, the types of problems created by the digital divide, and accessibility tools and strategies to bridge the divide.

The overall goal of the workshop series is to allow educators to create equity and cultural proficiency in their classrooms by lessening the digital divide. The first way that the workshop will do this is to shed light on the current inequities that exist in today's technologically enhanced classroom. Many educators may be unaware that the digital divide exists, so bringing attention to the issue will help educators realize that there are several considerations to take into account when introducing new technology into the classroom. Additionally, educators will be able to recognize how students from a higher income bracket typically enter the classroom with the privilege of greater technological experience (Ricoy, Feliz, & Couto, 2013). For example, Ricoy, Feliz and Couto's study on how the digital divide affected freshmen in Spain, they found that a major contributor to the digital divide was a lack of means to access the Internet as well as

"economic limitations for acquiring such devices" (2013). Educators may not realize that income correlates to technological advantages for students.

Another way that this workshop will increase equity and cultural proficiency in the classroom is to give educators an understanding of the issues created by the digital divide and provide information on the tools and strategies available for them to improve digital literacy for all of their students. The first workshop will build a foundation of knowledge for the educators around the digital divide and why it is important for them to be aware of it, but the second and third workshops will focus primarily on which problems are created by the divide and ways to address the issues in our own classrooms. Specific issues to be addressed include lack of access to technology for some students, skill gaps related to technology, and the cost of technology. Workshops two and three will help educators apply solutions that build upon their knowledge of the digital divide.

The target audience for this workshop series will be educators with a technology focus, mainly those who teach fully online or hybrid courses. Other educators are welcome and encouraged to attend, especially if they incorporate new technologies into their coursework often. The workshop is also appropriate for instructional designers who assist faculty with the creation of online materials. Ideally, no more than 30 learners will be present at one time, and each workshop will take place 2 weeks apart from the last one. This will allow learners to apply workshop material into their classrooms and bring that knowledge back to the workshop with them. Through attendance at the workshop "Bridging the Digital Divide," faculty and staff will be better equipped to create an inclusive environment for students of different economic classes and technological backgrounds.

Participant Learning Objectives

Transfer

Students/Participants will be able to independently use their learning to…

- Articulate why the digital divide impacts their profession and their students' learning experience.
- Implement tools and strategies in their classrooms to lessen the digital divide and support all students.

Meaning

UNDERSTANDINGS	ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
Students/Participants will understand that… - The digital divide exists between students of different socio-economic status. - The issues created by the digital divide can cause inequality between students. - Tools and strategies are available to help them navigate the digital divide.	 - What is the digital divide and why does it matter? - What tools and strategies are available to help me lessen the digital divide?

Acquisition

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS
Students/Participants will know…. - What the digital divide is and how it affects their classrooms. - The resources available internally and externally to address the digital divide.	*Students/Participants will be able to…* - Support students from all backgrounds to effectively utilize classroom technology. - Identify when additional training on classroom technology is needed for students.

Workshop Series: Overview

Workshop Series #1: What is the Digital Divide and why should I care?

Instructional Goal – Students will walk away with an understanding that the digital divide exists and what it is. Students will also know why they need to address the digital divide in their own classrooms.

What will happen: Students will learn from articles and videos about specific examples of the digital divide which prove how it can hide in plain sight. There will be discussions in small groups and activities for students to begin thinking about how this may exist in their own classrooms. After the session, students will be asked to poll their classrooms to gain a better idea of their specific populations and bring those results to the next workshop.

Workshop Series #2: Deep Dive into the Issues – Access, Skills and Cost

Instructional Goal – Students will be able to list and discuss the issues associated with the digital divide and begin to identify needs related to the divide in their own classrooms.

What will happen: The first part of this workshop will build off of pre-work from the first workshop. Students will be divided into groups to discuss the results of their surveys. This will be followed by a lecture of a deep dive into the issues created by the digital divide. Students will be split into groups again to discuss the prevalence of the issues in their specific classrooms.

Workshop Series #3: Implementing Solutions and Options for Support

Instructional Goal – Students will consider implementation strategies for solutions to the digital divide and design strategies specific to the needs of their own classrooms.

What will happen: The first part of this workshop will be lecture-based and focus on implementation strategies that have been used at other campuses. Individually, the students will consider what they have learned in the lecture and from pre-work for the workshop to compose a document of proposed solutions. The group will then divide into groups to obtain targeted feedback from each other.

<u>Workshop Series #1: What is the Digital Divide and Why Should I Care?</u>

Pre-Work

Two weeks in advance of the first workshop, learners will be asked to read the 2018 report "The Digital Divide and Educational Equity" by Moore, Vitale, and Stawinoga prior to attending the workshop (2018). The report is ten pages and learners will be notified and provided with the document two weeks in advance. Reminders will be sent out one week and one day prior to the workshop. This report will be part of a larger discussion during the first workshop.

Icebreaker/Introduction (15 minutes)

Participants will be assigned a number as they walk in which will correspond to a table number. This will make it less likely that participants will be sitting with those they know. The room will be split into five tables of six people. Once everyone is settled, the entire room will participate in an icebreaker activity where each person will announce their first name, what they do (teacher/instructional designer), how long they have been doing it, and a memory of one of their first experiences with technology. This will get learners to start thinking about what "technology" is and see how broadly defined the term can be.

Index Card Activity with Small Group Discussion and Larger Group Synthesis (40 minutes)

The goal of the index card activity is to show the learners how easy it can be to oversee the digital divide in their own classrooms. Each table will be given an index card with some questions on it related to the report they read (2018). All tables will be directed to a small "library" at the facilitator's table for research purposes where a few copies of the report will be. All students are welcome to visit the library to do research. Five minutes into the activity, the

facilitator selects three tables that can use their phones and the Internet to do their research. This is where the other two tables may become upset with the activity claiming it is unfair and asking how they can possibly complete the assignment without the proper tools. The facilitator has just demonstrated the digital divide. Two tables did not have access to the Internet or their phones. Yes, they could still complete the assigned task, but they were clearly at a disadvantage.

At this point the facilitator will ask each table to discuss amongst themselves how the activity made them feel and if this were a situation in their own classroom, how they might manage it. Each group will be asked to select the biggest takeaway from their discussion to be written on a flipchart and shared with the whole group.

Activity Questions

1. How many Americans live 25 miles or more from a public library? (Answer: 3 million)

2. How many students have claimed to have received a lower grade due to Internet access issues at home? (Answer: 42%)

3. How many students with access to one device at home have been provided that device from their school? (Answer: 28%)

4. How many respondents have access to two or more devices? (Answer: 85%)

5. What are two risks cited in the report for students with access to only one device? (Answer: No backup if the device breaks and need to share the device among family members.)

Break (5 minutes)

Students will be allotted five minutes to check emails and use the facilities.

Video and Report with Small Group Discussion and Larger Group Synthesis (50 minutes)

Students will watch the Ted Talk "The New Digital Divide: The Perception Problem" (2015) before discussing both the Ted Talk and the report that they were asked to read. In small groups, they will discuss what the most surprising points of the talk and report were for them and whether or not they have seen evidence of these issues in their own classrooms. Each group will be asked to select the biggest takeaway from their discussion to be written on a flipchart and shared with the whole group.

Conclusion and Homework Overview (10 minutes)

The facilitator will conclude the first workshop by summarizing the day's events and explaining the homework for the second workshop to the learners. Learners will be asked to distribute a survey to their students explaining the workshop they are attending and asking them to fill out a brief five question survey (questions below) in Qualtrics, if possible, for their students. Learners will be asked to bring the results report back with them to the second workshop.

Survey Questions

1. I have access to reliable Internet at home (Y) (N)

2. I have access to a personal computer at home (Y) (N)

3. I have access to a tablet or similar device for schoolwork (Y) (N)

4. I primarily use my smartphone to carry out my coursework (Y) (N)

5. I am confident that I can learn new technologies when my courses require it (Y) (N)

Resources:

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