

## An Exceptional Opportunity for Teachers

Wikipedia defines the digital divide as the gap between those with regular, effective access to digital technologies and those without. It most often results from the socio-economic differences between communities, thwarting equality of opportunity for students. But the digital divide exists among educators as well. One reason is the inability to access high quality software and hardware. Suffolk's Edge Teacher Center (SETC) is excited to offer a special program to change that.

Research confirms that teachers do much of their classroom preparation work—as well as their continued learning—at home. The NYS Teacher Center Technology Committee is collaborating with leading tech companies to bring quality hardware and software into educators' homes. The Technology Placement Program (TPP) enables teachers to expand their use and understanding of technology by purchasing computers configured with state-of-the-art systems or by upgrading currently owned systems.

The program is open to teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, school related personnel & pre-service teachers.



Basic System Available on [www.nytp.org](http://www.nytp.org)

Three bundles are being offered. The specifics of the equipment are outlined on the [www.nytp.org](http://www.nytp.org) website. Members of your educational community should carefully review the differences between the three bundles.

Here is a step-by-step guide to make a purchase:

1. Log on to the website at [www.nytp.org](http://www.nytp.org) and review the three different computer bundles being offered and the customizing options.
2. Purchase one of the bundles and receive an order number.
3. Contact Suffolk's Edge Teacher Center with that order number. You will receive a special offer coupon that will allow for a 10% discount on any future purchases, up to five items per coupon, on anything within the Dell catalog.

Please contact SETC with your questions.

## Building Professional Learning Communities

The term professional learning community (PLC) describes a collegial group of school staff whose primary goal is to collaborate for continuous improvement in student learning. PLCs are a potent force for school change and improvement. They can be school-based, district-based, cross-district or even national, but the membership in a specific PLC is determined by its focus. SETC is committed to the ongoing development of

professional learning communities in our member schools.

What does a PLC look like?

Five established PLC attributes are:

—Supportive and shared leadership between administrative and teaching staff, where all are on an equal footing. The old hierarchal structure is replaced by a collegial one.

— Shared values and vision developed from an unswerv-

ing commitment to students' learning. Students are pictured as academically capable and staff envision environments to realize each student's potential achievement.

—Collective creativity in which new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured and people are continually learning how to learn together.

—Supportive conditions which determine when, where and how the staff regularly →

## Building Professional Learning Communities (cont.)

### PLC Books of Interest:

- *Developing Learning Communities Through Teacher Expertise*: by Giselle O. Martin-Kniep
- *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* by Richard Dufour and Robert E. Eaker
- *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn* by Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Gayle Karhanak, Richard DuFour (editor)

### New Cohorts Beginning in the Spring!

- Educational Computing, Stony Brook University (scheduled to be held in Copicague UFSD)
- Master of Science in Literacy Education, Dowling College (scheduled to be held in Wheatley Heights)

Call the SETC for information.

come together as a unit to do the learning, decision-making, problem-solving and creative work. These include physical conditions and people capacities. Time to meet and talk, physical proximity of the staff to one another, interdependent teaching roles, safe environment for risk-taking, teacher empowerment and commitment to long-term sustainability are among them. —Shared Personal Practice

where teachers regularly visit one another's classrooms to observe, notate and discuss observations in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

The SETC Policy Board has added the following necessary attributes:

—Agreed-upon parameters (common focus or multi-focused, anticipated changes and expected impact on student learning).

—An evaluation component to measure the PLC's effectiveness and growth.

How do PLC's function? Why are they important? How are they introduced and developed in schools? These are some of the questions that will be explored in subsequent newsletter articles. Stay tuned! (*excerpted from articles at [www.sedl.org](http://www.sedl.org), [www.annenberginstitute.com](http://www.annenberginstitute.com), and [www.ncrel.org](http://www.ncrel.org).*)

## NYSUT Mathematics and Literacy Institutes to Focus on Teachers in Grades 3-8

NYSUT is offering a two-day Mathematics and Literacy Institute (one day for each subject) to assist teachers in helping their students increase math and literacy skills in grades 3-8. The Institute will be held on February 2-3, 2007 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Albany.

The year 2006 saw the first administration of the grades 3-8 mathematics and ELA tests. In this era of NCLB accountability these tests reveal an achievement gap that increases as we go from grades 3-8. There is still much to be learned from these test results, and the NYSUT 2007 Mathematics and Literacy Institute will give members an opportunity to hear from education leaders in both fields. Dr. Robert Gyles of the Hunter College Mathematics Center for Learning and Teach-

ing will share with participants how to create a differentiated classroom through bridging the gap between conceptual understanding and procedural knowledge. Dr. Judith Langer, a Distinguished Professor at the University at Albany's School of Education, will offer a programmatic vision, a set of principles, and real-life examples to guide members on using research-based knowledge to increase student literacy.

Friday's Mathematics Institute will focus on general education and special education teachers of mathematics in grades 3-8, teachers of English language learners, academic intervention service (AIS) providers and teaching assistants who work with students at these grade

levels.

Saturday's Literacy Institute will focus on strategies most relevant for teachers in general education classrooms grades 3-8 as well as special educators, reading specialists, academic intervention specialists, librarians and others who work with students in these grades. Participants will engage in facilitated discussions with practitioners who use research in their classroom.

For more information and online registration go to [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) and click on professional development.



## Useful Websites

<http://encarta.msn.com/> Award-winning electronic reference library with dictionaries, maps, handy homework tools and more.  
<http://www.refdesk.com/> One-click springboard to Web's top dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, calculators, and homework helper for all grades.

<http://www.howstuffworks.com> Do you wonder how CD burners work? Why earthquakes happen? These and many others questions are answered at this award-winning site.

<http://www.freetranslation.com> Perfect for language studies, this handy website automatically converts text from one language to another.

<http://www.math.com/> Help is provided in many math subjects. Practice exercises are automatically generated and the site features homework tips, math games, and lesson plans.

<http://www.download.com/> Links to tens of thousands of downloadable free or shareware programs.

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