# Preface

*U*sing WebQuests in the Social Studies Classroom: A Culturally Responsive Approach provides a practical approach for using WebQuests in the secondary social studies classroom. It helps teachers respond to three important questions facing them today:

How can I be a more culturally responsive teacher?
How can I help make social studies engaging for my students?
How might technology facilitate my work and that of my students?

## WHY THIS BOOK?

Today's classroom is more culturally rich than ever before, and new technology tools emerge so fast that often our students are more conversant with "the latest gizmos" than we are. So how do we engage this young, diverse group in subjects they might feel are dry and meaningless? How do we make the social sciences personal and real, so that students embrace the learning needed to help them become good, global citizens?

Our focus is on how teachers can optimize learning, enhance student inquiry, and promote greater intercultural understanding by infusing a simple, yet powerful, technology into their daily classroom work. In the traditional secondary classroom, lessons tend to start, on any given day, from where the lecture left off the previous day. This text provides instruction for using a proven technology and process (the WebQuest) to transport students from the present to the past and back, in and out of personal and cultural connections to history and other social sciences, in order to connect learners directly with curriculum content.

WebQuests are inquiry-oriented, collaborative activities that focus on using Web-based information to enhance higher-level analysis, synthesis,

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and evaluation. WebQuest assignments pose a stimulating and genuine problem for students to solve; direct them to resources that will provide up-to-date information and provoke analysis; and culminate in achievable, measurable results. Many teachers and educational programs worldwide have adopted this award-winning model for every type of primary- and secondary-level course. A number of scholarly articles in various trade publications describe the WebQuest methodology, but no comprehensive resource exists to provide professional development for teachers who want to develop a variety of models for use during an entire semester of coursework for a specific curriculum.

This book incorporates professional reflection and guided practice tools to facilitate such professional development. Using actual student stories inserted into vignettes that portray typical, culturally diverse classrooms, each chapter walks you through a series of exercises that will help you begin to answer the three important questions previously asked. We intend to enhance, not duplicate, the extensive resources available online for creating WebQuests by incorporating social studies topics (specifically, culturally responsive topics) and using a reflective approach with exercises based on the vignettes.

The first few chapters address today's culturally diverse classroom, the latest technology standards focusing on required skills, and the history and general process for creating WebQuests. Then, each chapter describes how to develop specific WebQuest components by using actual student voices and typical classroom challenges in a series of exercises throughout each module. Comprehensive examples of culturally responsive WebQuests used in the exercises throughout the book are included in five of the chapters.

Teaching cultural sensitivity is important—perhaps more so—even if your classroom is not diverse. And even though the vignettes and exercises in this text focus on experiences of more recent immigrants, the lessons you develop using this approach can just as easily integrate the cultural backgrounds of students from Native American, African American, or more traditional Western European heritages.

## REAL VOICES . . .
## TYPICAL CLASSROOM CHALLENGES

Soso, a native of Zambia, looks to his father to teach him about his country and cultural background via the Internet "because we really don't do much of that at all in school." How can Frank Parker, Soso's tenth-grade history teacher, engage his diverse class and make the study of history, economics, health, and

sociology personal? How can he use technology to focus on complex problem solving to guide these students in civically responsible decision making?

Anita Bertz has never been satisfied with her lesson plan about world religions. Anita's world history classroom this year includes Happy-Hardy Guinguing, an ESL student from the Philippines. When given the chance to write about his country and culture, he states, "Thank you for listening to what I have to say. I never express myself like this before. I feel less to be ashamed." Can Anita create a WebQuest that will encourage students like Happy-Hardy to express themselves in ways they never have while gaining a deeper understanding of the root causes of religious conflict?

Juan from Maria Borden's social studies class tells about his first experiences as a young student whose father had brought his family to America from Mexico. Trying to learn in the classroom without understanding the language was so exhausting, he would sleep from the time he got home from school until the next morning. Now he is more fluent in English but finds his courses are too American-centric; he wishes his classmates had more opportunities to learn about his country and his culture. How does Maria handle the challenge of teaching about American immigration to a classroom where the experience might be personal—and painful?

Ron Kowal wants to use technology in his sophomore geography class to engage his students. Vladi is from Bulgaria and Russia and loves to share his knowledge of Eastern Europe with others. What technologies can Mr. Kowal introduce to his class to transform mapping from paper and globes to a more interactive, creative, and exciting assignment? How can he integrate experiences and enthusiasm like Vladi's into this lesson?

Jared Zawod believed his student Haseena's quiet nature was due to shyness or language difficulty and was surprised—and disappointed in himself—when he learned that her culture's respect for authority drove her subdued classroom behavior. The experience made him realize that his civics lesson plan on voting rights and responsibilities had become rote. Now that he understands more about his Afghan student, he finds a way to breathe new life into his curriculum.

Poroma is a student from Bangladesh who finds her American teachers somewhat unapproachable. Her sociology teacher, Janeka Gonzales, decides to use Bangladesh's recent history to go beyond textbook discourses on the social impacts of industrialization of agrarian economies. Can she make Poroma feel more included while creating a real and relevant lesson for her class?

Do you have students like Soso, Happy-Hardy, Juan, Vladi, Haseena, and Poroma in your classroom? Or is your classroom less diverse, but you want to create a more global and inclusive atmosphere to help your students become better world citizens?

## PRACTICAL, USABLE CURRICULUM CONTENT

Using these classroom examples, each chapter employs a workbook approach to stimulate thinking about how to integrate cultural responsiveness and technology to engage your students in your particular curriculum. Five completed, culturally responsive social studies WebQuests are included as examples, and instructions reference the National Council for Social Studies Standards (NCSS) strands, the American Historical Association's criteria for Excellent Classroom Teaching, and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards into all modules.

This text is intended for coursework in secondary history/social studies methodology and classroom applications of technology courses on both undergraduate and graduate levels. It will also be useful as a guide for professional development workshops and seminars for teachers interested in learning more about engaging culturally responsive social studies and technologically enhanced instruction. And current practitioners who might not be taking a course on these topics will find that the workbook format facilitates self-study. Implementing the methodology in this guide is a step toward infusing humanistic education into the classroom.