Tools for Collaborative Teaching in Netseminars and Netcourses

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Two projects called the International Netcourse Teacher Enhancement Coalition (INTEC) and the Virtual High School (VHS) Consortium involve studying and utilizing advanced collaborative technologies for teacher professional development and for the development of netcourses for students (see http://www.concord.org). Netcourses are courses of study that are offered through the Internet and graphical browser as a main way to share information, carry out discussions, and assess student learning. Netseminars are Internet-based courses offered to teachers-in-training to create netcourses for their virtual students. The overarching goal is to test the scalability and adoption of the netseminar/netcourse model to deliver robust virtual instruction given various resource constraints of real-place settings, and the diversity of school and social contexts for learning.

INTEC support teachers directly in implementing the use of student investigations in mathematics and science at the middle and high school levels by offering a set of network-based high quality netcourses linking participants with exemplary NSF curriculum development efforts. The hybrid instructional approach includes netseminar delivery through a graphical browser, face-to-face meetings at the site, as well as net based virtual study groups on-line to support both synchronous and asynchronous discussion.

The Virtual High School Consortium project explores 1) the feasibility of creating of strong partnerships and communities between teachers, school administrators, technologists, and content experts through collaborative technologies, 2) the scalability and replicability of these electronic communities to support secondary school instruction and 3) the promotion of constructivist teaching practices toward global education reform.

A suite of tools are integrated to support instruction in the INTEC and VHS netseminars and netcourses. For example, Graffiti Tree permits Web-based collaborative sketching. Lotus Learning Space authoring environment and DOMINO discussion server provides the highest level of interactivity to date on the web. Participants can exchange and view multiple file types, build web based discussions, and on-line multimedia curricula without the need for HTML authoring.

In this demonstration, conference attendees will have the opportunity to experience a netseminar, as well as test a suite of innovative tools for collaboration. Attendees will have the opportunities to jointly construct a netcourse, and engage in on-line critique and discussions around knowledge building in the LearningSpace environment while examining previous discussions by teachers around the country.

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