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From the Desk of Tim Mack, President, World Future Society



Education Planning for the WFS

One of the highlights of the 2005 Annual Meeting in Chicago was a gathering of WFS members in the education field to develop strategies for the World Future Society in this critical area. A group of several dozen attendees discussed the following points:

- What education programs are presently underway at WFS? 1) The partnership of WFS and **Global School Net** went well and the web-based **CyberFair** project drew entries from grades 3-12 all over the world. Several of the competitors were able to come to Chicago and present their entries. 2) The **New Prep 21** project has been collecting University and secondary curricula now being offered worldwide and continues to get material regularly. 3) The **Ten Cube** project with Case Western University is going forward as a standard setter for high school level science projects, initially focusing on the subject of energy storage technology. 4) Finally, WFS continues to look for additional project partners working on futures and science training. Please send me any candidates that come to mind at tmack@wfs.org.
- What is still needed? 1) For Elementary and Secondary Education – we need to show the relevance of future studies, and we also need to do outreach to school districts and departments of education and to teachers at all levels who need support materials. 2) WFS needs to better mentor young people entering the futures field. How do we do this? Should WFS provide mentoring programs at the annual conferences? Should WFS provide volunteer mentors at the conferences? 3) Charter School groups may also be good targets ... including national groups and conferences.
- What are future studies? – Suggested descriptions included: “We keep educators, students, and education systems energized and open to new ideas.” “We encourage educators and students to use their creativity and imaginations.” “We learn how to spot opportunities, problems, and tipping points.” “Perhaps as important as anything else, we overcome the isolation of disciplines, professions, and even industries, and make school or college a relevant force.”
- Who are futures students...1) K-12, 2) College, 3) Post Grad, 4) Continuing Ed, 5) Mentoring, 6) Business Practicum Education [Need to engage students worldwide and not just in the United States and need to provide a network for engaged teachers (champions in learning)]

- Should WFS more involved in other educator group conferences? Are educational technology conferences a good route for introducing and promoting future studies? Social studies conferences and other soft science teaching groups seems to be more open to futures subjects.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES AT UPCOMING WFS CONFERENCES

- More student related and student run sessions in Toronto.
- More interactive dialogue in all the sessions at Toronto.
- Need both volunteers and fundraising initiatives to move present and suggested programs forward.
- Need effort to involve game developers in education projects – more electronic interactivity Work on events to bring more creativity to conferences.
- More on-line self-education – electronic discussion groups.
- More distance learning, perhaps using the United Nations University Project open source model for on-line curricula. It could be a base tool to build academic or practicum learning options.
- Create open space web events before and after the conference where people can meet and caucus.
- Mid-career and adult education is also critical.
- Proposal to create a more specific conference scholarship for youth attendees – e.g., tack on \$20 or more donation option in the conference registration to allow students to come on scholarship.
- Do a focus group at the conference with educators about how to get futures materials into schools.
- Leverage **FUTURE*takes*** newsletter materials (“the points for consideration” appended to articles and program synopses) from the US National Capital Chapter for high school and college teaching.
- Establish a youth speaker special event in future conferences. Launch an education committee effort to develop youth programs in Toronto.
- All in all, it was clear WFS needs more volunteer involvement in the task of conference program development, conference publicity and outreach to new organizations about the value of futures education. Any potential volunteer is encouraged to contact me at tmack@wfs.org.