

# Futurizing Your Teaching Practice

An online "Webinar" series that gives practical tools you can use

School children have a natural attraction to the future. They wonder what they might be when they grow up or where they might live. They worry about the impact of today's problems on their future.

So preparing children for the future is a key role for teachers. Teachers do encourage students to make good decisions, yet few teachers are truly prepared to help students envision how different the world of tomorrow may be or how to imagine a more desirable future and to work toward it. As a result, they rarely talk explicitly about the future.

Nevertheless, some educators with a forward-looking perspective are helping their students explicitly "tool up" for thinking wisely about the future. They also find that teaching about the future provides an opportunity to differentiate their curriculum for gifted students within the constraints of curriculum mandates.

Our team of forward-looking presenters are preparing an online "webinar" (web-based seminar) called Futurizing your Teaching Practice which is being co-sponsored by the Futures Studies Program at the University of Houston, the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented, and the Texas Future Problem Solving Program. The purpose of the webinar is to encourage teachers of all disciplines to use futures concepts and techniques with students in their classes.

The series will consist of four interactive online sessions from **4:00 to 5:30 PM (CST)** on Thursday afternoons. The series will satisfy the requirement for the 6-hour GT update for Texas teachers since it provides another effective way to differentiate the classroom for the diverse set of students today. It may satisfy continuing education requirements in other states as well.

## **Session I - October 20, 2011 - Why teach about the Future**

Although the concept of the future is rarely mentioned in the state curriculum, it is easy to integrate a futures perspective into any subject to focus on higher-order thinking and preparation for advanced placement examinations. Public school teachers representing GT education, future problem solving, social studies and language arts along with two college professors will share their classroom experience of teaching a futures perspective in their respective subject areas and grade levels. Session I will reinforce the relevance of teaching futures in the classroom, its applicability across the curriculum and student enthusiasm for learning a futures perspective.

## **Session II - October 27, 2011 - What to teach about the Future**

This is a content session designed to address the "what to teach" question. Participants will be introduced to how change occurs, anticipating changes in a wider-deeper-longer context, and developing a systematic approach to futures inquiry.

## **Session III - November 03, 2011 - How to teach about the Future (Tools and Techniques I)**

This is the first of two process sessions. Participants will learn how to identify good futures topics—i.e., a key question or issue to be studied. The session then turns to gathering information about that topic using a taxonomy we call STEEP which stands for Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political drivers of change. The third step analyzes that information, looking for patterns of change across time and assessing their importance and impact ten to twenty years forward using a tool called a future wheel.

## **Session IV- November 10, 2011 - How to teach about the Future (Tools and Techniques II)**

The second process session will stretch the participants' information and imagination to build scenarios about the futures of 2020-2030. Having scoped out what the future might be like, participants will then set goals and select strategies for influencing the future towards a more preferred outcome.

**All sessions from 4:00 to 5:30 PM (CST)**

## **Presenters**

Dr. Peter Bishop, Associate Professor of Strategic Foresight and Director of the Futures Studies Program, University of Houston

Dr. Kay Strong, Associate Professor of Economics at Baldwin-Wallace College, who coordinated the UH Summer 2010 Futures Camp for middle-school students

Ms. Cyd Rogers, Texas State/Affiliate Director and Member of the Board of Trustees for the Texas Future Problem Solving Program International. Ms. Rogers has taught gifted/talented and future problem solving both in the classroom and to teachers and coaches throughout Texas

Ms. Margaret Fitzgerald, GT Coordinator, West Briar Middle School, Future Problem Solvers - Coach/State Evaluator

Ms. Kay Lynn Fenn, MS - Studies of the Future from University of Houston Clear Lake, currently teaching high school level government and social studies in Katy ISD.

Ms. Cheryl Brown, 8th grade Pre-AP English Language Arts Teacher, Houston ISD