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Editor's Corner - Letter to the Editor: Science / Technology / Society

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EDITOR'S CORNER

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Science/Technology/Society

Dear Editor:

During the past two years, as I have worked with the University of Iowa's Chautauqua program, I have become concerned that relatively few science teachers have begun to incorporate Science/Technology/Society (STS) materials into their existing curriculum. Lack of a concrete definition of Science/Technology/Society has often served to frustrate teachers and disinterest them in using the concept even though they have already used many of the ideas in their teaching. A little creativity can often overcome a lack of "cook-book" rules in setting up an STS project and can produce a very rewarding experience in science education. Much has been written on the subject of STS curriculum and this in itself should provide many ideas.

In order to build on the concept, I feel that each aspect of the term STS must be examined. The "S" or "Science" part of the terminology is not intimidating to most science teachers — this is what they have been trained to teach.

As we consider the second term, "Technology," we can find much more uncertainty. Many science teachers have not been trained in the complex rationale which lies behind today's technologies. However, many times a brief discussion will motivate students to do their own research. In any case, detailed explanations of today's technology are available with a small amount of searching.

The third term, "Society," seems to be the strength of the STS concept. I feel this is where the STS curriculum truly makes a difference in the quality of science education. By probing the effect of our technologies on society, we as science teachers, can finally provide a credible answer to the question, "But why do I need to study this?" Even though clear-cut answers are usually impossible, the discussion often helps students realize that an understanding of scientific concepts is invaluable in our modern society.

Another positive result of using the "Society" concept of STS is a strengthening of school-community relations. By using local resource people, a feeling of partnership develops as both the community and the school strive to make science courses practical and useful to the students.

Because the STS concept is multi-faceted, it may have as many definitions as people working with it. It is not an easy, cure-all approach to teaching science concepts; however it is a very rewarding and thought-provoking method of instruction. The STS approach to science education is one which surely deserves consideration by anyone teaching science or developing science curriculum.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jeanne Rogis
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