

# Realizing Technology's Potential in Ensuring Quality Education for All

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## Background

In January 1990, the MIT-based Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Project issued a report entitled *Education That Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities*. The QEM Network, a Washington, DC-based non-profit organization, was established, with core support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, in June 1990 to focus efforts to achieve the vision and goals<sup>1</sup> set forth in *Education That Works*, and to promote the report's strategic action principles.

Over the past decade, public and private sector efforts, both large and small, have been mounted in urban, suburban, and rural areas across America to help effect the needed systemic changes in education and increase understanding of the inextricable link between education and quality of life. As called for in *Education That Works*, minority and non-minority communities alike are beginning to recognize that "quality education for minorities is critical to America's continuing prosperity and international leadership."

In addition to such efforts, the decade of the 90's has produced technological innovations that hold significant potential for ensuring the delivery of education of the highest quality to every school and home in America. Realizing technology's potential to revolutionize the delivery of

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 1: Ensure that minority students start school prepared to learn.

Goal 2: Ensure that the academic achievement of minority youth is at a level that will enable them, upon graduation from high school, to enter the workforce or college fully prepared to be successful and not in need of remedial assistance.

Goal 3: Significantly increase the participation of minority students in higher education, with a special emphasis on the student of mathematics, science, and engineering.

Goal 4: Strengthen and increase the number of teachers of minority students.

Goal 5: Strengthen the school-to-work transition so that minority students who do not choose college leave high school prepared with the skills necessary to participate productively in the world of work and with the foundation required to upgrade their skills and advance their careers.

Goal 6: Provide quality out-of-school educational experiences and opportunities to supplement the schooling of minority youth and adults.

instruction as well as the opportunity it affords to stimulate within individuals a life-long "love for learning" will require new and enhanced collaboration between and among all sectors of our communities.

Moreover, it requires demystifying the scientific and engineering concepts that undergird technology, debunking myths and misconceptions, and diminishing the "digital divide" that exists between families in rural areas and central cities and families in more affluent communities.

### **Focus of Presentation**

We will focus on strategies to address these barriers for *residents in rural areas and central cities, especially in low-income public housing communities*, as well as for forming collaborative networks that use technology to significantly improve education for minorities. The proposed strategies also would further the achievement of three of QEM's goals: well-prepared high school graduates; well-prepared teachers; and quality out-of-school educational experiences for minority youth and adults. The specific technology goal we will propose for adoption follows:

Technology Goal: Ensure that students attending predominantly minority schools in America's rural areas and central cities reap the full educational benefits that instructional technologies can deliver, within and outside of school settings.

Myths and misconceptions to be addressed revolve around affordability, availability, required skills set, and perceived irrelevance to one's quality of life. Realities to be discussed include limited awareness of: the pervasive nature of technology and our growing dependence on it in almost all aspects of our daily lives; the benefits that accrue from the use of technology for research purposes as well as for the delivery of services in areas such as education, health, security, and communications; and the extent of the disadvantages derived from lack of knowledge, due in no small measure to the "invisible" nature of telecommunications, as well as from lack of access, training, and use.

Existing as well as new strategies for addressing such issues will be discussed, based upon the work of other organizations and individuals as well as upon QEM's direct experience in the communities targeted in the technology goal.