Preparing students for the future and the future of education must begin today. Educators need to become the educated, especially in the field of technology. Classrooms of the future will not look as they do today, the teachers will not teach, preach as most do now, school districts will not be financed as they are in this day. Children are the future of mankind and what happens today will affect this generation and generations to come. Technology is the means to change and informed educators are the key to implementing this change.

The school of the future will be constructed as a large dome, with the hub or gathering place in the center. Numerous rooms will open around the hub for small group gatherings and independent work areas. Students will not have desks but rather work stations which have wireless, networked computer terminals with internet access. The internet will be received by signals sent through the airwaves similar but more refined than today’s radio signals. There will also be quiet areas for small groups and individuals to reflect and problem solve. Several rooms will be devoted to virtual learning where students will ‘step into’ a situation and help determine the outcome. There they will relive history, it will in essence come alive. Science will become more than ‘hands-on’, it will become real by participating and completing experiments. The students will be taught problem solving techniques which will be the basis for their learning.

The teacher’s role then must be that of facilitator and not information dispenser. In the younger years the main focus of the educator will be that of ‘Social Director’ and ‘Literacy, Numeracy Coordinator’. These very important persons will help each individual develop those virtues which help them become valued citizens. They will guide students in mastering the skills of reading, writing, and basic math. Facilitators in the next years will focus on problem solving strategies and computer and technology skills. As the students master each of these skill areas they will then move
on to schools which will focus on problem solving within the major academic areas, science, social science, math, life situations. These schools will also prepare students physically as well as mentally. The teacher’s role then must be even more defined as that of facilitator, a resource, who guides students through problems with problem solving techniques. The students will be expected to complete ‘Benchmark’ activities to prove their mastery of subjects.

How, then will these schools and districts be financed in order to insure equal education for all students? There is currently a group in the city of Roseville, CA known as B.E.C.O.M.E., Business, Educators, Community, Organized to Maximize Education, whose purpose is to partner local businesses with school districts and schools in the area. This organization was formed to bring together the resources, goals and expectations of the business world and the world of education. Donations of time, support, materials and student and teacher recognition programs have been the core of this groups being. The teachers and students benefit also by having a clearer picture of the business world and the qualifications needed to succeed after ‘mandatory’ education. This program is the first step. More companies need to join this movement in order to insure the necessary link between the ‘real world’ and education. Funding for education must be a coalition among federal and state governments, businesses, school districts and families. This combined effort must have as its driving force the notion that educated children are the future.

It is imperative that all children receive equal opportunities for education. Every person is an individual and therefore has different strengths and interests. Students at an early age must be given the opportunity to experience different situations through virtual reality so that they may pursue their interests. Not only educators need to look to the future as Dr. David Thornburg has written in his articles, businesses and governments must also.

After graduating college, I became a stay at home mother of three. It wasn’t until my youngest daughter was in preschool that I was able to return to school to obtain my teaching credential. In the twelve years since then, education has taken on a new look. I have witnessed a new era of teachers. Teachers who are not willing to change are being left
behind. When I first started teaching schools were given monies by the state. Reading specialists, counselors, nurses, instructional assistants and supplies were funded to help the schools. In the past 12 years many schools have tried to look to the future and some have been successful. These schools have some technology for the students and teachers in the form of computer labs, teacher stations, televisions, VCR’s, laser players, digital and video cameras. Gone are the reading specialists, counselors, instructional assistants. Many businesses have generously donated equipment to local schools, companies have underwritten grants for technology, districts have provided some technology to the schools. This is not enough. Make no mistake, if public education does not get on the ball, this will truly become a society of haves and have nots, far more so than it is today. In order to be prepared for the future, to supply the students with the tools for the jobs of tomorrow, the coalition must be formed.

Both Roger Von Oech in his book, A Whack on the Side of the Head, and Dr. David Thornburg in his articles about the future of education, have challenged today’s educators to rethink the status of schools in the future. Perhaps my vision of the futuristic school is not too far off. Or to give us all a ‘whack’, maybe a miniscule computer chip loaded with all the knowledge we need will someday be implanted in brains at birth. Childhood would then be a time of social development and fun; schools would no longer be necessary; educators extinct.

Until that time, however, this joint Master’s Program between Sacramento State and San Juan Unified is one small step for schools, one giant leap for districts. To have the chance to become a teacher of teachers in technology both delights and frightens me. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to improve myself and my skills, then share my knowledge with others. This is the beginning of a journey to touch the future.