

High Tech Programmers in Low-Income Communities: Creating a Computer Culture in a Community Technology Center

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Abstract

In this paper, we will apply Oakes' (1992) technical, normative, and political dimensions of school reform to the case of the Computer Clubhouse, a community technology center, to illustrate how the barriers to change in after-school settings are similar to that in schools. We were concerned with the need to help young people become more technologically fluent, particularly in their ability to computer program. Our analysis builds on two years of observation and community development at the Computer Clubhouse, where programming had initially not taken root. In our discussion, we will focus on the impacts of the normative and technical aspects of change, such as the introduction of a new programming environment oriented towards media production, and the increased amount of mentor support.