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Cisco, Intel and Microsoft Lead Collaboration to Improve Global Education Assessments

PISA, TIMSS Join Forces With Cisco, Intel and Microsoft to Develop Next Generation of Assessments

LONDON--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Three leading technology companies announced today a collaboration aimed at transforming global educational assessment and improving learning outcomes. At the Learning and Technology World Forum in London, Cisco, Intel and Microsoft unveiled plans to underwrite a multi-sector research project to develop new assessment approaches, methods and technologies for measuring the success of 21st-century teaching and learning in classrooms around the world. During the session, the three companies called upon educational leaders, governments and other corporations to join in the effort.

The three companies also announced the appointment of Barry McGaw PhD, currently the director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, as executive director of the project. McGaw will oversee an executive committee, project lead team, and up to 50 leading experts and innovators in academia and government, to collaborate on the research and assist in influencing the development of future international and national assessments.

With an extensive background in academia and research, McGaw has served as the director for Education at the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) where he was involved with international education assessments in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

"Shrinking resources and market pressures mean that education can no longer be the sole responsibility of governments," said McGaw. "Building the future workforce will require a commitment from the private sector to partner with public institutions. Reforming assessment is essential to enabling any systemic change in education. And change on a global scale is required to equip students of today with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce of tomorrow. PISA's international education assessments focus on key competencies in reading, mathematics and science. In PISA 2003, we took a step by adding an assessment of problem solving, but one limited to analogical reasoning. We hoped to add information and communications technology (ICT) competence in PISA 2006 but did not succeed. We all need now to work together to advance assessment practice."

The assessment research and development project spearheaded by Cisco, Intel and Microsoft has received the support of major international assessment organizations. Specifically, OECD and the International Association of the Evaluation of Educational

Achievement (IEA) have expressed interest in using the evidence-based and verifiable output of the 21st-century skills assessment to inform the development of the next versions of PISA and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), their respective international benchmarks.

"In the global economy, it is the world's best performing education systems, not simply improvement by national standards, that have become the yardstick for educational success," said Andreas Schleicher, Head of Education Indicators and Analysis, OECD. "That is why more and more countries measure the relative strengths and weaknesses of their education systems with OECD's global PISA assessments. To do so effectively, it is crucially important that these assessments continue to evolve to reflect the skills that matter for individuals and economies. Technology-based assessments will be critical to this and the project brings together key partners that can help PISA make this happen."

"IEA is committed to the greater integration of IT into all its assessments, especially TIMSS and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study," said Seamus Hegarty, chair of the IEA. "This reflects the changes in learning environments and the potential of technology to enhance the teaching and learning process. We look forward to working with the collaboration to achieve our common goals for young learners."

Based on extensive research[1], Cisco, Intel and Microsoft concluded that most education systems have not kept pace with the dramatic changes in the economy and the skill sets that are required for students to succeed. These skills include the ability to think critically and creatively; to work cooperatively; and to adapt to the evolving use of technology in business and society.

The project will focus on several key areas that will offer the most promising opportunities for transforming education and assessment. Teams of educators and academics will focus on enabling education assessment methodologies and technologies, effective learning environments, and replicable ICT-enabled teaching and assessment methods that foster the development and assessment of the skills students will need to succeed. To accelerate the project in time to influence the next versions of PISA and TIMSS, the project will review successful classroom practices for the teaching and testing of 21st-century skills and draw implications for large-scale assessments.

"Cisco believes a holistic transformation of the global educational system requires a long-term, multi-stakeholder commitment from the public and private sector," said Michael Stevenson, vice president of Global Education, Cisco. "We believe the collaboration between Cisco, Intel and Microsoft can serve as an impetus in creating and implementing an international assessment standard to measure skills and abilities that are critical for student success in the 21st-century."

"Cisco, Intel and Microsoft each have a long commitment to global education and enabling and empowering educators," said Will Swope, Intel's vice president and general manager, Corporate Sustainability Group. "The collaboration will help us to reach our common goal of transforming education around the world. Specifically, we are aiming to resolve the gap that exists between what goes on in schools and what goes on in the real world and better measure the skills that are truly needed for the 21st-century."

"As we continue to engage with government leaders, institutions and educators, one of the most important points that is consistently raised is the need for public and private sectors to unite in an effort to extend access to quality education, increase graduation rates and create a consistent way to measure success," said Anoop Gupta, corporate vice president for the Unlimited Potential Group, the Education Product Group, and Technology Policy and Strategy at Microsoft. "Through this collaboration, we hope to inspire others to join the mission because we believe that, together, we can make greater impact towards ensuring students of today are better prepared for the workforce of tomorrow."

A webcast of the announcement can be viewed at http://latwf.org/webcasts.html. For more information about getting involved in the project, contact Barry McGaw bmcgaw@unimelb.edu.au.

About Cisco

Cisco (NASDAQ:CSCO) is the worldwide leader in networking that transforms how people connect, communicate and collaborate. Information about Cisco can be found at http://www.cisco.com. For ongoing news, visit http://newsroom.cisco.com.

View commentary from education dignitaries at LATWF at www.getideas.org. For additional information on Cisco's Global Education initiative, visit www.transformglobaleducation.org.

About Intel

Intel (NASDAQ:INTC), the world leader in silicon innovation, develops technologies, products and initiatives to continually advance how people work and live. Additional information about Intel is available at www.intel.com/pressroom and blogs.intel.com.

To learn more about Intel's commitment to education around the world, visit www.intel.com/education and to join Intel's community of people inspired by education, visit www.inspiredbyeducation.com.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (NASDAQ:MSFT) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

For additional information on Microsoft's products, programs and solutions for education, visit www.microsoft.com/education.

[1] Transforming Education: Assessing and Teaching the Skills Needed in the 21st Century: A Call to Action. Intel, Microsoft and Cisco Education Taskforce, September 1, 2008.

Source: Intel Corporation