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# News Release

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## **Cisco, Intel and Microsoft Collaborate to Improve Education Assessments**

### **International Education Assessment Leaders PISA and TIMSS Endorse Project, Plan to Incorporate Key Findings into Next Versions of International Benchmarks**

LONDON, Jan. 13, 2008 – 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 21<sup>st</sup>-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 Professor Barry McGaw PhD, currently the director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, as executive director of the project. With an extensive background in academia and research, McGaw will oversee an executive committee and project lead team, as well as up to 50 leading experts and innovators in academia and government to collaborate on the research and assist in influencing the future of international and national assessments.

“Shrinking resources and market pressures mean that education can no longer be the sole responsibility of governments. Building the future workforce will require a commitment from the private sector to partner with public institutions,” said McGaw. “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. The international education assessments in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), with which I was involved as Director for Education at the Organization for Economic Co-

Operation and Development (OECD), focus on key competencies in reading, mathematics and science but we always wanted to extend the scope to cover important new skills. 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 the Cisco, Intel and Microsoft collaboration 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 21<sup>st</sup>-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 has become the yardstick for educational success. That is why more and more countries measure the relative strengths and weaknesses of their education systems with OECD’s global PISA assessments,” said Andreas Schleicher, Head of Indicators and Analysis, OECD. “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, and this 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 (PIRLS),” 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<sup>1</sup>, Cisco, Intel and Microsoft concluded that most education systems have not kept pace with the dramatic changes in the economy at large and the skill sets that are required for students to succeed. These skills include the ability to think critically and

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

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 it believes 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 21<sup>st</sup>-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 21<sup>st</sup>-century.”

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

**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's official collaboration website [www.getideas.org](http://www.getideas.org). For additional information on Cisco's Global Education initiative, visit [www.transformglobaleducation.org](http://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](http://www.intel.com/pressroom) and [blogs.intel.com](http://blogs.intel.com).

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