

A photograph showing two students from behind, wearing large headphones. They are looking at a computer monitor that displays a website with a map. The student on the right is using a mouse. The Microsoft logo is in the top right corner.

Microsoft®

DISCOVER

Partners in Learning

Transforming Education. Creating Opportunities.



Global Partnership at Work



Innovative Students: Cultivating Critical Skills



Innovative Schools: Achieving Universal Education Goals



Innovative Teachers: Sharing Success



Transforming Education. Creating Opportunities.

At Microsoft, we recognise education as critical to the social and economic development of every nation, helping individuals everywhere to become citizens of the 21st Century. The most powerful driver of the global economy today is the acquisition and transfer of knowledge. And while information and communications technology creates exceptional opportunities for people around the world, it has also contributed to a widening skills gap across communities, as well as a “digital divide” between countries.

Through Partners in Learning, we encourage new approaches to teaching and teacher professional development. Since 2003, Partners in Learning has touched the lives of over 90 million students, teachers, and policymakers in 101 countries. Building on this success, Microsoft has renewed its commitment to Partners in Learning, increasing the company’s investment to nearly U.S.\$500 million over 10 years. The three key areas of focus are:

- Innovative Schools uses shared experiences and goals to create models that any school or system can use to prepare students for success in an evolving global economy.
- Innovative Teachers helps teachers to learn from one another through the Innovative Teachers Network—using national or regional portals—and the Innovative Teachers Forum—events that recognise best practice in technology in the classroom.
- Innovative Students aims to provide students with access to programmes and curriculum that integrate technology into the learning process.

Partners in Learning is unique, not only in scope, but also in structure, being based on agreements with government and non-governmental organisations, working at every level of the education sector. Its programmes are primarily implemented through innovative local partnerships involving Microsoft and the education community to ensure their relevance. Such partnerships mean we can address a range of educational challenges and opportunities.

In Portugal, Microsoft is a key partner in the Magellan Initiative, a revolutionary programme which will deliver 500,000 low-cost laptop computers to schoolchildren. As part of the government’s “Technology Plan - Portugal”, the Magellan Initiative is bridging the “digital divide”, increasing access to learning materials, and preparing students to participate in a knowledge-based economy. Microsoft provides a customised learning suite for the computers, and supports this with a complete package of training, learning content, technical support, and online communication and collaboration services.

In Denmark, the School for the Future Foundation, a public-private partnership between 10 industry partners initiated by Microsoft, gives grant aid to innovative and creative projects that seek to explore and renew teaching methods in schools, so children gain the most from teaching and are wholly committed to learning.

In regions throughout Europe, academic programme managers for Partners in Learning work with governments, educators, and educational institutions to identify needs, create measurable solutions, and effectively manage change. In Austria, for example, around 40 government officials and educational professionals participated in a Microsoft “brunch and talk” meeting to discuss the Microsoft vision for the future of education, and how those benefits could be achieved by the national education system.

Students today belong to the first generation in history that knows significantly more about technological innovation than their teachers. As a result, they expect a whole new set of learning tools that compliment their digital lifestyles. Microsoft is committed to helping students access important technology and, working with our partners, provides proven learning materials to spark their imagination and ease meaningful learning inside and outside the classroom.

For example, Partners in Learning supports the work of “Math Coaches”, an innovative programme in Sweden started in 2007. University students offer online help with homework to secondary school pupils from 4th grade up to leaving school using Windows Live Messenger. The maths coaches are from the University of Uppsala, north of the capital, and go online every weekday evening helping several hundred students with problem solving when their regular teachers are not around. Three more regions in Sweden including Stockholm are planning to implement the Math Coaches scheme.

In kindergartens throughout Austria, many teachers have been trained by the Microsoft “Smart Mice—Children Discover Language” initiative, to assist them in using ICT to help develop the language skills of children between the ages of four and six. Smart Mice is game-orientated, creating a fun, self-paced, and stimulating educational challenge, whilst at the same time developing vital computer skills. Over 10,000 children have benefited from the programme so far.

The Microsoft Innovative Schools programme is assisting schools across the globe to move beyond the boundaries of the classroom and offer alternatives to traditional teaching models. It works with experts in the field to support a strategic shift towards making education more engaging, inspiring, and relevant.

The Innovative Schools programme assists schools by providing intellectual property, technology expertise, experimental knowledge, and the support of our community. We work with them to inspire big thinking and discover best practice. Through our shared experience and goals, we are creating models that any school, any system, can use to prepare students for success.

In Ireland, Dunshaughlin Community College has been chosen as one of the 12 schools taking part in the Innovative Schools Programme, helping it to develop its technology capabilities and give students an education to prepare them for life after school. Other participants in the programme include schools in both Sweden and Finland.

Innovative Schools serve as important laboratories in the evolution of education. Over the next five years, Partners in Learning will invest in new Innovative Schools and help extend the discovery tools and best practices learned through these model programmes to serve the needs of educators worldwide.

For students today to compete in the ever changing job market, the learning environment within schools must understand and mirror the characteristics and behaviours of the outside world. At Microsoft, we believe that a learning environment which supports these critical skills must encourage not only students, but also the educators tasked with preparing students for the world of work.

To achieve this, our Innovative Teachers programme is committed to supporting educators as they develop and share successful methodology and protocols, incorporate them into their own professional development, and then transfer them into the student learning environment.

Every year Microsoft arranges the Regional Innovative Teachers Forum, in which participants present their ideas for innovative teaching for evaluation by European judges, who represent a spectrum of the European education research community. In 2008 it was held in Zagreb with 150 teachers taking part, and the 2009 regional forum will take place in March in Vienna. Visit the blog page for the 2009 forum to find out more: <http://blogs.msdn.com/itf09/>

Around Europe, we work with our partners to build a sense of community among teachers and help them collaborate with their colleagues, provide access to quality content, and challenge educators to use technology in new ways.



Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to learn is an enormous challenge that requires participation by both the public and private sectors. The Microsoft Innovative Schools programme is a good example of this. Microsoft is deeply committed to collaborating with its global education partners to support transformations in teaching and learning.

“Microsoft represents the business world and there are significant benefits to using the same tools that companies use to hire, train, assess, and motivate their people.”

Seamus Ryan
Principal, Dunshaughlin Community College,
County Meath, Ireland

Building a Partnership for the Future

At Microsoft, we are committed to continue learning from and building on the important lessons of Partners in Learning. Together with our partners worldwide, we are working to make a measurable difference in closing the "digital divide" and unleashing the potential of students and teachers everywhere.

To find out how Partners in Learning can work with you and your local education community, go to www.microsoft.com/education/pil

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