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MARCH 4, 2009

DepEd, Microsoft extend partnership for ICT-empowered learning

Jointly launch the second phase of Partners in Learning

The Department of Education (DepEd) and Microsoft Philippines bolstered a partnership to enhance the Philippine educational system through ICT-enabled teaching and learning.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said, "We wish to equip Filipino students with skills that will make them leaders in the 21st century world. To accomplish this, we must improve our basic education and utilize ICT to transform it."

According to Lapus, Partners in Learning increased technology access for public schools throughout the country and enabled school administrators and educators to train in effectively integrating ICT in classroom teaching.

"The first five years of Partners in Learning have given us the amazing opportunity to work together with schools and teachers in changing the way students learn and ensuring an improvement in student performance," said Rafael Rollan, Managing Director, Microsoft Philippines.

"We believe that a sound, IT-enhanced educational system will produce individuals who are skilled, globally-competitive, and able to make meaningful contributions to our community," said Rollan. "Filipino students will one day be helping our country be competitive too and Partners in Learning started this journey by expanding learning beyond the four walls of the classroom today."

In the next five years, Partners in Learning will focus on identifying, sharing and scaling practices and behaviors that improve learning outcomes, through three program areas that have the greatest potential to empower and transform education: Innovative Schools, Innovative Teachers and Innovative Students.

- **Innovative Schools** helps schools around the world to move beyond the limits of the classroom and traditional learning models. Through shared experiences and goals, the program aims to create models that any school, any system, can use in the future, to prepare children for success in an evolving global economy.
- **Innovative Teachers** connects and empowers educators worldwide. The Innovative Teachers Network enables teachers to learn from one another and work collaboratively on new approaches to learning through national or region-wide portals. The Innovative Teachers Forums are a set of national, regional, and worldwide events that identify and reward exceptional practices on the use of technology in the classroom.

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- **Innovative Students** aims to provide students with access to programs and curriculum that help fully integrate technology into the learning process, both in school and at home. It also enables qualified governments to increase technology access for underserved primary and secondary student households that aspire to own a PC with affordable and reliable software.

Reaping the results of a strategic partnership for education

“Through our partnership with the Department of Education, we have been able to reach more schools and train more teachers,” said Michelle Casio, Academic Programs Manager, Microsoft Philippines.

“Partners in Learning is about fostering innovative approaches to teaching so that students will become competent and capable individuals. Since we started the program in the Philippines in 2004, we’ve seen how we can make more improvements. The second version of Partners in Learning will build upon the most effective programs of the last five years,” she added.

Partners in Learning paved the way for the implementation of projects that provided resources and development training for schools, teachers and students.

More than 20,000 educators have been trained on Digital Literacy and ICT Integration, 21st Century Leadership, and advanced ICT courses. In March 2008, 28 educators graduated from a master’s program in Instructional Design Technology and more Partners in Learning teachers trained abroad on curriculum delivery.

Educators who have undergone training become tech coaches, voluntarily cascading their knowledge and conducting training sessions for their colleagues.

“ICT training is integral to the formation of Filipino education professionals for them to deliver quality education to our students,” said Lopus. “And the training being conducted by the Partners in Learning tech coaches – who are DepEd teachers themselves – addresses this need.”

A portal has also been developed to enable teachers to share lesson plans and best practices. The Partners in Learning online community presently has over 40,000 members comprised of teachers, school administrators, principals, ICT coordinators and other education stakeholders.

In addition to training, Partners in Learning has made software available to public schools through Fresh Start, which provides Microsoft Windows licenses for donated computers, and Partners in Learning School Agreement, which offers special pricing on Microsoft Office applications.

Furthermore, DepEd and Microsoft rolled out a platform of services for all DepEd schools nationwide called Microsoft Windows Live@edu initiative. This gives participating schools access to free services which include e-mail hosting,

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database integration, data repository, and learning resources. Currently, over 20,000 teachers have their own DepEd e-mail accounts.

DepEd and Microsoft renewed their collaboration for Partners in Learning as the program enters its next phase. Launched in the Philippines in 2003, Partners in Learning is a Microsoft global initiative for education, designed to increase schools' access to technology and improve the use of ICT in the classroom.

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