

Microsoft Will Invest \$4 Million to Develop Education in Russia

The Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Science and the Microsoft Corporation have signed an agreement on strategic cooperation to promote the use of information technologies in the education system

MOSCOW, October 4, 2004—The Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Science and Microsoft Corporation today announced that they have signed an Agreement to Cooperate on the Development of Modern Information Technologies for the Education System. The ministry's cooperation with the Microsoft Corporation comes under Microsoft's international non-commercial education initiative, Partners in Learning. Its objective is to expand the use of modern information technologies (IT) in high schools and vocational schools.

Microsoft has been active in supporting the Russian education system in recent years. Three years ago, support for education projects was officially defined as a special area of work at Microsoft's Moscow Representative Office. The company has provided support to professional competitions for Russian education workers, as well as IT Olympics for schoolchildren and college students. It also participates in exhibitions and conferences on education, provides books on IT to libraries at educational institutions, distributes Microsoft method books and courses for teachers free of charge, and conducts teacher training, seminars and conferences.

Andrei Fursenko, Russian Federation Minister of Education and Science, stated that "the agreement we have signed lays a firm foundation for the process of introducing innovative technologies in the education system." He believes that "it is impossible even to imagine education today, without the use of state-of-the-art technologies." Summing up, Fursenko said, "First we study, we invent and we develop something new, and then those inventions help us to study. This is the virtuous circle that has to be supported." He particularly emphasized that he found it "doubly pleasant, to be involved in cooperation with a company like Microsoft, which has earned such a good reputation in the IT sector."

The Partners in Learning initiative is an important step by the Microsoft Corporation towards its strategic goal in education: to help teachers and students use information technologies to take advantage of all the opportunities they have. The Microsoft Corporation works with government education agencies and NGOs in many countries, to support the use of the tremendous educational potential of IT, both by teachers and students. So far, more than 70 countries, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and many others, have signed cooperation agreements with Microsoft under the Partners in Learning initiative.

Information technologies are a priority area for Russia today. The government realizes the importance of developing and expanding IT at all levels of education. Beyond basic knowledge, students today need to master "21st-Century skills", such as the ability to organize joint work in an effective way, as well as communication and competent information management. Cooperation between the government, the education system and IT companies, can help to promote the development of these disciplines in Russian education.

The Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Science and the Microsoft Corporation define the main goal of the agreement they have signed in terms of the following objectives:

- To give graduating students fluent mastery of information technologies.



- To equip Russian Federation educational institutions with a higher level of information technologies.
- To develop teaching materials for use in the education process.
- Training and retraining of IT instructors.
- Development of innovative approaches to teaching these disciplines, through pedagogical, organizational and methodological work.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Microsoft Corporation plan a range of joint projects, in order to achieve these goals. They include the creation of special web resources to support and develop the community of innovative teachers, who make use of IT in education — the Microsoft Innovative Teachers Network. These web resources will help teachers exchange their experience in using information technologies in education and innovative approaches to teaching various disciplines.

Implementation of the Microsoft IT Academy program for high schools and vocational schools will enable these institutions to bring their instruction up to international standards for the latest Microsoft technologies, so that their students can acquire the professional knowledge and skills needed to become a Microsoft Certified Professional or Microsoft Office Specialist.

The agreement also provides access to Microsoft's latest software.

The Microsoft Corporation has allocated \$4 million for the implementation of these and other education projects in Russia during the next four years.

