

Microsoft, MOE and IDA Embarks On BackPackLive! Education Initiative

Announcing the four year initiative in scaling up ICT practices in Teaching and Learning, Microsoft also celebrates the achievements of innovative teachers in Singapore

Singapore, 16 July 2009 –Ministry of Education (MOE), the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) and Microsoft Singapore, today announced the launch of the BackPackLive! initiative. This initiative is an expansion of the previous five year IDA-Microsoft BackPack.NET initiative launched in 2003. The new collaboration will focus on inspiring, exploring and scaling ICT practices among teachers to develop students’ self-directed and collaborative learning capability.

BackPack.Live! comprises of four pillars: Professional Learning Communities; Developers Community, Cyber Wellness ; and Recognition & Promotion. It aims to transform the learning environment for students in Singapore by facilitating greater engagement with students, and promote learning in an interactive environment using multiple senses. This initiative is also part of Microsoft’s global Partners in Learning programme.

BackPackLive! was officially launched by Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary, MOE who said, “We aim to leverage the use of ICT to enrich the learning environment for our students and to equip them with essential skills to succeed in the knowledge economy. In collaborating with IDA and Microsoft, BackPackLive! will complement our efforts to help us bring about these outcomes.”

Ronnie Tay, Chief Executive Officer, IDA said, “Infocomm has the potential to transform our education sector, allowing our students to develop self-directed and collaborative learning capabilities. IDA is pleased to partner Microsoft and the Ministry of Education in this BackPackLive! initiative to bring innovative technology into our schools, which will enable our students to be confident and discerning in using infocomm to learn anytime, anywhere effectively. ”

Jessica Tan, Microsoft Singapore Managing Director, said, “Microsoft is committed to partnering with the government in using Infocomm Technology to enhance the education environment in Singapore. Riding on the success of BackPack.NET, this renewed collaboration with MOE and IDA will help nurture the innovative effort of teachers and give students the foundation to learn, collaborate and be equipped for the knowledge economy.”

Awarding the Innovative Use of IT in Teaching

The Microsoft Professional Development Award (MMPDA) initiative comes under the Recognition & Promotion pillar of BackPackLive! At today’s launch, MMPDA winners in Singapore were honoured for their innovative teaching methods. The MMPDA rewards teachers who make outstanding, effective and innovative use of ICT to support engaged learning for the benefit of the school community. It also recognises their effort in inspiring others in the use of ICT for teaching and learning. Launched in 2004, the award has since attracted 326 entries from 218 schools where 26 teachers were selected as winners.

Ms. Fong Yin Kuan from Beacon Primary School clinched the MMPDA and also emerged the runner-up for Microsoft’s Educators Choice Award 2008 when she competed in the Worldwide Innovative Teachers Forum in Hong Kong last year. She uses Digital Story Telling to teach her Primary One students the English language.

Using a Tablet PC and Microsoft® Office PowerPoint®, students write and illustrate stories, create a storyboard which they narrate and record, and then share their work with classmates. Fong's students not only master English, but they also acquire some core technology skills while they learn collaboration and teamwork.

Sharing her success, Ms. Fong said, "My young students enjoyed creating stories about their alien characters using Microsoft Paint and Microsoft PowerPoint. As most of them do not have keyboard skills, I got them to work together on Tablet PCs to create their aliens. The process builds confidence, and enables them to be more independent learners. The best thing is that they enjoy their learning and I enjoyed teaching it."

Other MMPDA finalists include Kwan Tuck Soon from Rulang Primary School, Siti Norzahurin Binte Sudin from Coral Secondary School and Lam Chee Leong from Jurong Secondary School.

The call for entries for MMPDA 2009 is now open. MMPDA welcomes entries by Singapore educators who have outstanding, effective and innovative use of ICT to support engaged learning and demonstrated innovation in content, community and collaboration in teaching and learning. Closing date for entries is 11 August 2009, Tuesday. Please visit <http://apac.innovativeteachers.com/mmpda/AwardCategories/Pages/ApplicationProcess.aspx> for more information.

About Microsoft's Partners in Learning

The Microsoft Partners in Learning initiative supports the dual commitment by Microsoft to advance the quality of education and provide alternative channels for economic progress. By building partnerships with governments and schools around the globe, Partners in Learning works to integrate technology into daily teaching, learning, and research.

About the Ministry of Education, Singapore

The Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) formulates and implements education policies and programmes in consultation with its stakeholders. These policies and programmes aim to help all students discover their talents, realise their potential, and develop a passion for learning that lasts through life. MOE also oversees the development and management of the Government and Government-aided primary schools, secondary schools and junior colleges. Please visit www.moe.gov.sg for more information.

About the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore

The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) is committed to growing Singapore into a dynamic global infocomm hub. IDA uses an integrated approach to developing infocommunications in Singapore. This involves nurturing a competitive telecoms market as well as a conducive business environment with programmes and schemes for both local and international companies. For more news and information, visit www.ida.gov.sg.



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.

Background Information on Backpack.NET

Launched in October 2003, Backpack.NET was the first education initiative where Microsoft, IDA and MOE collaborated to create a fundamental shift in the way a student experiences learning through the use of innovative Tablet PC (TPC)-based learning applications. The five-year programme aimed to facilitate the research, development, testing and showcasing of innovative Infocomm technologies for use in Education. The total investment of the programme (by IDA, Microsoft Singapore, industry partners and participating schools) was announced as S\$20 million.

Working closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE), the National Institute of Education (NIE), schools and developers, the key objectives of the Backpack.NET initiative are:

- Create a test-bed environment for emerging technologies in education.
- Provide a viable infrastructure for the development of software and digital content solutions for Singapore's education community
- Enable value creation for the infocomm industry, through collaboration in strategic education markets; and
- Reinforce Singapore's position as a Centre of Innovation and a leader in the use of infocomm technologies in education

The 4 pillars of Backpack.NET were positioned to be mutually reinforcing and helping to create solutions that will meet users' needs and to accelerate the use of IT in education. The 4 pillars are:

- Pilots and trials
- Developers' community
- Classroom of the Future (COTF Live!) &
- Education research and development

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