ECS, ISTE and Microsoft to Sponsor Global Education Competitiveness Summit

States come together to improve and innovate in education.

WASHINGTON — June 23, 2009 — As the United States endures a decades-long achievement gap for minority and low-income students and finds itself slipping in international benchmarks measuring student proficiency in math and science, the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and Microsoft Corp., with the support of Cisco Systems Inc., have joined to support states on ways to use public school improvement and innovation efforts to improve U.S. academic and global education competitiveness.

Recent studies, such as Achieve Inc.’s “Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education,” have found that the achievement gap has hurt the United States’ economy. As the nation looks to revive and restructure its economy to match the changing needs and demands of the 21st century, ECS, ISTE, and Microsoft and their partners will work together to help revive public education.

As a first step, the organizations will host a Global Education Competitiveness Summit (GECS), June 29–30 in Washington, D.C., that will bring together United States governors, policy makers and corporate leaders and government leaders from Australia, Finland, Singapore, and Canada, to focus on specific steps to boost student achievement and United States competitiveness. Hosted in conjunction with ISTE’s National Educational Computing
Conference (NECC), June 28–July 1, the GECS will provide an opportunity for states to work together with the private sector and other organizations to create real steps to assess and strengthen state education systems.

“The GECS supports a number of important initiatives already underway, specifically the ‘Common Core Standards’ initiative led by CCSSO and the NGA. The GECS supports the leadership role of the states that U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan recently spoke about. It will be the states that develop strategies to meet much higher standards – not the federal government,” said Roger Sampson, ECS President. “Recent data shows this is not simply an academic exercise. Maintaining the status quo in our schools has a serious and significant economic impact on our nation. In this time of uncertainty, we need to act now to ensure current and future generations of students are equipped with the skills and knowledge to compete. GECS is focused on helping states identify and develop a plan that leads to greater global competitiveness.”

Another objective of the GECS is to initiate multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of a pipeline of future workers equipped with necessary skills and knowledge. Recent findings have pointed to science-technology-engineering-math (STEM) skills, 21st-century skills and some form of postsecondary education as requirements for future jobs. By targeting improvement efforts at the state level, GECS seeks to harness governors’ abilities to directly impact K-12 education, higher education, work-force development and economic development. The goal is to quickly deliver the necessary policy changes and resource support required to ensure a competitive student body and work force, maximizing current resources available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The summit will be hosted by Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who is currently chair of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and co-chair of Achieve, and just concluded his tenure as chairman of the National Governors Association.
Findings from the Achieve Inc. study include some of the following economic impacts of the achievement gap:

- Higher math performance at the end of high school translates into a 12 percent increase in future earnings. If the United States raised students math and science skills to globally competitive levels over the next two decades, its GDP would be an additional 36 percent higher 75 years from now.

- If the U.S. improved enough to become a top-performing nation on international assessments between 2005 and 2025, by 2037 its GDP would be an additional 5 percent higher than if skills stayed the same. Improving human capital pays off even more handsomely over a longer time horizon. By 2080, America’s GDP would be 36 percent higher than would be the case if the U.S. remained mediocre in math and science.

- Each additional year of schooling among the adult population raises a nation’s economic output by between 3 percent and 6 percent. High skills lead to elevated individual wages, a more equitable distribution of income, and substantial gains in economic productivity.

Featured guests at the summit include ISTE CEO Don Knezek, ECS President Roger Sampson, and Microsoft Corporate Vice President for Education Michael Golden. Andreas Schleicher, head of the Indicators and Analysis Division for the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), will address the questions about education competitiveness matters and make a case for international benchmarking and assessment transformation. Other government leaders participating in the summit include Director General Timo Larkenan from Finland, Director of Curriculum Planning and Development Low Khah Gek from Singapore, and Premier Dalton McGuinty from Ontario, Canada.

“This summit is about strengthening schools, which in turn fosters innovation and drives economic growth,” Golden said. “By investing in our education systems, with an eye on creating the skills needed to compete in the 21st century workplace, we have the opportunity to strengthen our workforce and our communities through better education opportunities.”

Members of the media are invited to attend GECS sessions on Monday, June 29 at 10 a.m. EDT at the National Press Club in the Holeman Lounge. During this session, attendees will
hear from Pawlenty who will highlight the United States education’s global competitiveness.

Schleicher will then discuss why competitiveness is important and the global picture of

education.

Following these keynote speeches, a panel including Sampson, Knezek from IST and
Golden will discuss why it is imperative for American education to restate itself as a world
leader, and the need for states to embrace international benchmarking and assessment
transformation.

Members of the media are also invited to attend the closing keynote speech on Tuesday,
June 30 at noon EDT at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Room 201. An informal
Q&A session with GECS participants will proceed at 1:30 p.m. EDT.

About ECS

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is the only nationwide, nonpartisan
interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education
officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning
at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS (www.ecs.org) was formed in 1965 and is located in
Denver, Colorado.

About ISTE

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is the premier membership
association for educators and education leaders engaged in improving teaching and learning by
advancing the effective use of technology in PK-12 and teacher education. Home of the National
Educational Technology Standards (NETS) and the National Educational Computing Conference
(NECC), ISTE represents more than 100,000 professionals worldwide. Visit www.iste.org to
learn more.
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 more information, press only:
Marlene Nesary, ISTE, (541) 302-3789, mnesary@iste.org
Mary Ann Strombitski, ECS, (303) 299-3609, mstrombitski@ecs.org
Wendy Carhart, Waggener Edstrom Worldwide for Microsoft, (503) 443-7354,
wendyc@waggeneredstrom.com
Rapid Response Team, Waggener Edstrom Worldwide for Microsoft, (503) 443-7070,
rrt@waggeneredstrom.com