May 12, 2000, Teachers and students at Ottawa's Rideau High School had the chance to showcase their latest GrassRoots online projects at a press conference held to announce Cisco Systems Canada's $200,000 investment in Industry Canada's SchoolNet GrassRoots Program. On hand to celebrate the announcement were Cisco's Canadian General Manager, Pierre-Paul Allard, and Industry Minister John Manley.

GrassRoots projects are Internet-based projects that combine the study of traditional curriculum subjects with opportunities for students to develop employment-related information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The SchoolNet GrassRoots Program is funded by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in partnership with the private sector. Cisco's investment will help the program to reach its goal of supporting the creation of 20,000 online projects by March 31, 2001, creating opportunities for up to 5 million Canadian students to develop ICT skills.

During the event, Mr. Allard, Minister Manley and local media had the chance to tour the Rideau Craftsman Web site project which profiles products built and sold by students to raise money for school activities. Through the site, customers view merchandise online before placing a purchase order electronically. Plans for the future include an e-commerce platform to allow credit card transactions over the Web.

The hours leading up to the event were hectic as Rideau High staff and students prepared for their guests. The school's Cisco Networking Academy students helped by networking the computers that would support the project demonstrations.

"My students love working with technology," explained Lorin MacKay, a Rideau High School teacher and Cisco Academy Co-ordinator. "They love the hands-on work, and the responsibility of being treated like an adult in the real world."

Through the Cisco Networking Academy program, students develop a solid grasp of information network infrastructure and prepare for Cisco Networking Certification.

"We're very pleased to be able to offer our students these opportunities," explained Rideau Principal Patricia Irving. "As an inner city school, we're aware of the issues facing schools in low-income areas. It's key that students have the chance to develop technology skills that will prepare them for the future. SchoolNet GrassRoots helps with that."

Cisco Systems Canada invests $200,000 in SchoolNet GrassRoots Program

BCE Inc. chair asks business to support Brain Gain, SchoolNet GrassRoots

In an essay published in the Globe and Mail (May 3rd, Brain-Gain: The ABCs of Dot-Com), Jean Monty, Chairman and CEO of BCE Inc. made a plea for increased private sector support of public education, highlighting the need to help provide students with ICT and teamwork skills, and citing SchoolNet's GrassRoots Program as an example of a successful mechanism for business to contribute.

"These students are mastering important employability and entrepreneurial skills, applying their creativity and working in teams, and I imagine, having a lot of fun in the process," wrote Mr. Monty, referring to GrassRoots project participants.

"There is no better time to get involved. Projects like this are a huge Brain Gain opportunity—encouraging the depth and agility of our knowledge-workers, of our schools, our communities and our country in the world."

The SchoolNet GrassRoots National Campaign is seeking private sector support to help establish 20,000 online projects in schools across the country.

BCE Inc., and a number of private sector companies have played a key role in helping Industry Canada's SchoolNet Program support the integration of ICT into Canada's classrooms.

SchoolNet's GrassRoots National Campaign is an Industry Canada initiative working to raise $15 million from Canada's private sector to help 5 million young Canadians learn valuable ICT skills. For further information on how your organization can participate in the Campaign, please contact Beth Clarke at (613) 957-9554.

Visit the Campaign Web site at: www.schoolnet.ca/grassrootscampaign
On May 8th, 2000, Industry Minister John Manley extended his congratulations to the winners of GrassRoots Communities@ca, a national competition for schools to research, design and create GrassRoots projects about their communities.

The GrassRoots Communities@ca competition will award $3,000 to the top-ranked St. Elizabeth Catholic School from Ottawa; $2,500 to second-ranked Salisbury Morse Place School from Winnipeg; $2,000 to third-ranked Laval High School from Placentia, Newfoundland; $1,000 to fourth-ranked Lower Coverdale Elementary School from Lower Coverdale, New Brunswick; and $600 to fifth-ranked Brookside Secondary School from Cobourg, Ontario. Participating students ranged in age from elementary students in regular and enhanced school programs, to 18 year-olds at a school in a young offender institution.

Ten other schools designated for honourable mention will each receive $300. The Grand Tracadie Elementary School from Tracadie, Prince Edward Island, will receive the first-ever $300 “Distinguished New Site Award,” presented to a first-time participating school.

Sites were evaluated by competing schools, as well as by a national panel of teachers and education experts. Criteria included design, technical sophistication, interactivity, value to others, community involvement and creativity. Students looked at their communities from geographical, historical, cultural, business and other perspectives. Highlights from the winning sites include photos, animated characters, maps, multimedia tools and interviews.

For more information about the Microsoft-GrassRoots Commitment to learning, visit:
http://www.schoolnet.ca/grassroots/

For a complete list of Communities@ca winners, visit the SchoolNet GrassRoots Web site at:
http://www.schoolnet.ca/grassroots/

Microsoft “Commitment to Learning” supports online projects

“We are thrilled with the quality of the projects that are being produced,” announces Elizabeth Moyer, Education Program Manager for Microsoft Canada. “These teachers and students are doing groundbreaking work.”

Ms. Moyer is referring to the crop of projects currently being highlighted as part of the “GrassRoots-Microsoft Commitment to Learning,” an initiative that rewards the teachers and students responsible for innovative GrassRoots projects with free Microsoft software. Throughout this school year, Microsoft has provided incentives and rewards for schools involved in SchoolNet’s GrassRoots Program. To date, the company’s commitment to this initiative exceeds $300,000 in free software.

“This is a very strategic investment for us,” explains Ms. Moyer. “By helping students and teachers to acquire core IT skills today, we’re helping to create an IT literate workforce for tomorrow.”

Microsoft Canada has been a steadfast supporter of SchoolNet’s GrassRoots Program since October of 1998, when company Chairman, Bill Gates, joined Industry Minister John Manley to announce Microsoft Canada’s $1 million investment in SchoolNet’s GrassRoots National Campaign.

Yvon Massicotte, is a high school teacher at Jean-Nicolet High School in Nicolet, Quebec. A 32-year education veteran, Mr. Massicotte has seen great changes in the way education is delivered to students. Like many educators, he also sees tremendous opportunities for technology-enabled learning, especially given the trend towards teaching ICT skills in the wider context of core-curriculum skills.

“ICT and informatics should not be taught in school for their own sake,” he explains. “Information technology should be used by teachers as a tool to stimulate learning and student engagement in curriculum subject matter.”

For a number of years, Mr. Massicotte has been a dedicated participant in the SchoolNet GrassRoots Program. He believes it allows students to further explore curriculum subjects while developing ICT and teamwork skills. “GrassRoots projects help kids learn better through personalized projects and allow them to work at their own pace and style,” says Massicotte.

In partnership with SchoolNet GrassRoots, and under his tutelage, Jean-Nicolet High School students have produced 14 GrassRoots projects since 1997, and are currently working on a 15th. The school’s most popular project, the award-winning La boîte à jeux, tasks high school students with developing the content and layout for a series of interactive educational games on the Web. These games are designed to help primary school children learn basic analytical, reading and math skills.

Mr. Massicotte explains that his students are more enthusiastic, creative, and take their work more seriously when publishing their projects for a wider audience. GrassRoots projects also provide an outlet for teachers to be creative in delivering curriculum. “I believe sincerely that the greatest strength of the SchoolNet GrassRoots Program is that it allows teachers to implement teaching ideas that excite them and to share their enthusiasm with students to help them learn.”

To see Jean-Nicolet High School’s La Boîte à jeux project, visit:
http://esjn.csriveraine.qc.ca/Boite/default.htm

Veteran Teacher ‘shares enthusiasm’ through online projects

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