



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Montgomery County Public Schools Announces Partnership
With Innovative Technology Company
Providing Handheld Solutions for Teachers**

*School System Teams with Wireless Generation to Develop
Handheld Computer Assessment that Saves Time and Informs Instruction*

ROCKVILLE, MD, June 3, 2005 – Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland, one of the nation’s highest performing school districts, and Wireless Generation, the leading provider of handheld computer software used by teachers to perform observational assessments, today announced the release of mCLASS:Reading 3D software, developed through a unique collaboration between the school district and the education technology company.

This new product enables teachers to use a handheld computer to administer two kinds of assessments commonly relied upon to evaluate students’ reading development throughout grades K-3. One is the scientifically research-based Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (known as DIBELS). DIBELS has been adopted by many states and districts since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act to identify students at risk for reading failure who need additional support and monitoring to achieve reading benchmark goals. The other is a set of measures from the MCPS Assessment Program in Primary Reading that is based in balanced literacy, an approach to reading instruction that blends phonics instruction with more holistic activities that emphasize understanding meaning through context.

The advantage to having these two kinds of assessments in one product is that many educators use multiple approaches in looking at children’s reading progress during the year for the greatest degree of diagnostic insight. The handheld computer technology allows teachers to capture easily the data from both assessments in one central place, for a full picture of a student’s reading development.

“The instant access to data from these handheld assessments gives our teachers critical knowledge about their students in real time. The teachers can immediately turn that knowledge into action by adjusting their teaching strategies to fit their students’ needs. So far, we’re seeing great results,” said Dr. Jerry D. Weast, superintendent of schools.

The mCLASS:Reading 3D software was developed with the support of and in consultation with the DIBELS co-authors, Roland Good, Ph.D., and Ruth Kaminski, Ph.D., of the University of Oregon and Dynamic Measurement Group. Leading educational publisher Harcourt Achieve is also a key partner, providing a set of acclaimed Rigby books for teachers to use in administering reading records. Teachers use reading records to place students at appropriate reading levels and identify patterns in errors students make when reading aloud. Harcourt Achieve has worked closely with MCPS for more than ten years and plans to support mCLASS:Reading 3D software with supplemental reading resources.

As a co-developer of the software, MCPS will benefit on several fronts. The district will receive a discount on subscription fees for the right to use the software to assess its students. In addition, MCPS also will receive royalties on all sales of the software to other school districts nationwide.

Wireless Generation software makes assessment easier and more effective, helping teachers to use data to shape instruction. Teachers turn on their handhelds, select a student's name and assessment activity, and follow along as the student does reading tasks, recording the student's performance with just a tap on the screen. Once the exercise is finished, the teacher receives a student's results instantly on the handheld, "syncs" the handheld to a computer to view Web-based reports on the class and individual students, and uses the information to tailor instruction to students' needs. Teachers and administrators can access additional reports on a school or district. Use of the software has played a key role in bringing parents into the student achievement process by providing easy-to-understand reports on student progress that can be used in parent-teacher conferences.

Approximately 75,000 teachers in 43 states have switched from paper to Wireless Generation's handheld computer software to assess more than 1 million children.

"From its inception Wireless Generation has relied on the feedback of the teachers and administrators who use our software, so it was a natural progression to collaborate with a top school district for our latest literacy tool. Superintendent Jerry Weast and his team understood how our technology and existing assessments could be brought together to create one product that filled a void for educators, meeting the needs of MCPS and many districts across the country," said Larry Berger, co-founder and CEO of Wireless Generation. "mCLASS:Reading 3D software puts a remarkable inventory of reading assessment methods at teachers' fingertips."

Harcourt Achieve, publisher of comprehensive and supplementary early reading programs participated in the handheld reading assessment collaboration. "We've enjoyed our long standing relationship with MCPS and support their state-of-the art literacy program as a model for other districts nationwide," said Lynn Harris, vice president, national sales manager, Harcourt Achieve.

About Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), located in the Washington D.C. suburbs, is the 17th largest school system in the United States. Nearly 140,000 students from 167 countries and speaking 134 languages are enrolled in 192 schools. Recognized as a national leader in early childhood education, MCPS's Early Success initiative in Kindergarten through Grade 2 has produced substantial gains in reading skills among students learning English and those most impacted by poverty—effectively narrowing the achievement gap by race and ethnicity. Twenty-three MCPS high schools have been recognized by *Newsweek* magazine as among the best in America for the high number of students taking Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests. The class of 2004 set a record high average SAT score of 1102 with an 80 percent participation rate. MCPS recently has been named the winner of Maryland's most prestigious award for organizational performance excellence—the U.S. Senate Productivity Award. On the Web: www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

About Wireless Generation

Wireless Generation is the leading developer of preK-12 observational assessment software. With its suite of handheld computer-based assessments for early reading and math, the company has transformed the way educators collect and use assessment data, helping to create a culture of continuous feedback and improvement in classrooms. Wireless Generation continues to develop new products based on its mission of using technology to maximize the educational value of every teacher-student interaction. More information is available on the Web at www.wirelessgeneration.com.

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About Harcourt Achieve

Harcourt Achieve produces learning solutions and content that fundamentally and positively change the lives of young and adult learners. Published under the Rigby, Saxon and Steck-Vaughn imprints, its products are based on a developmental philosophy that assesses learners' skills, matches them to appropriate content and accelerates them to meet and exceed expectations. The Rigby imprint offers progressive learning solutions for core reading and English language learner instruction that provide differentiated instruction to match each student's instructional level. The Saxon imprint offers the nation's best selling and most thoroughly researched skills-based mathematics program for grades K-12, as well as popular phonics, K-3 spelling, and early learning programs. The Steck-Vaughn imprint offers easy-to-use, innovative learning solutions that accelerate content-area knowledge, reading skills, and preparation for standards-based tests, allowing learners to meet and exceed expectations. For more information, please visit www.HarcourtAchieve.com.

Harcourt Achieve is part of Harcourt Education, a global education provider serving students and teachers in Pre-K through grade 12, adult learners and readers of all ages. The Harcourt Education companies are Harcourt School Publishers; Holt, Rinehart and Winston; Harcourt Achieve; Harcourt Assessment; Classroom Connect; Harcourt Religion Publishers; Harcourt Trade Publishers; Greenwood/Heinemann and Heinemann Global Library. For more information, please visit www.harcourt.com.

About DIBELS

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS®) are a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. The measures assess skills that are consistent with the essential early literacy domains discussed in both the National Reading Panel (2000) and National Research Council (1998) reports in areas of phonemic awareness, alphabetic understanding, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary development and comprehension. Each DIBELS® measure has been thoroughly researched and demonstrated to be a reliable and valid indicator of early literacy development and predictive of later reading proficiency. When used as recommended, the results can be used to evaluate individual student development as well as provide grade-level feedback toward validated instructional objectives. DIBELS has been included in 45 state Reading First plans. More information is available on the Web at <http://dibels.uoregon.edu>, or www.dibels.org.

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