Remarks
Michael Dell, Chairman and CEO, Dell Inc.
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Thank you. It's great to be here today. You know, as I look out at this audience of education professionals, I can't help but think of Mrs. Darby's seventh grade math class at Johnson Junior High. Mrs. Darby was the first teacher in my school to have a teletype terminal in our school, and that really changed by life. I know now better than ever how important it is for technology to become part of our children's lives in school.

I've personally benefited from the Houston Independent School District and now, my wife and I have the privilege of giving back to teachers, educators and the children they influence through our Family Foundation. Over the past seven years, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation has committed $170 million to education programs around the world….and we're particularly proud that we've contributed $70 million right here in Texas.

This is a great state, one we are very proud to be a part of….it's a place where you can expect us to continue to invest in what you do to provide the best possible future for the children of Texas……..

I believe we all know that when the public and private sectors work together, we can make an incredible impact. What I'd like to share with you today is what's working, based on our own experience at the foundation.

We all know there are no silver bullets to improving student achievement.

But we have observed that there are several critical elements that make any reform or program successful:

- First, we have to understand the needs of the students in your school or district – what are the gaps in their learning? What are their strengths?
- Second, we have to define what "good" looks like – how high is high? How will you measure success?
- Third, it's imperative that you monitor results real-time so that you can make continuous improvements in the classroom
- And finally, we have to cultivate the leadership and skills necessary to execute well

In our work, we have seen many different programs that work well to improve student results if they have those critical elements -- from AP Strategies to AVID to charters and more. Like many things, success is in the execution.

And technology plays such an important part in improving education today. Let me describe three important observations.

The first is to develop technology as a SKILL. To help young people succeed in today's global economy, they need to have the math and science proficiency and technical skills

required to compete. The impact of education technology goes beyond the individual, though. Successful nations need people with 21st-century skills and the ability to fully utilize the tools of the modern age.

The fact is, those countries with a well-trained workforce attract companies looking to expand globally. Such companies generate real economic opportunity and the kinds of well-paying jobs that are greatly needed in all parts of the world – including right here in the U.S. and in Texas.

As an example, India's focus on math and science education has been an integral part of the economic success it's enjoyed. With the IT industry flourishing there, India's gross domestic product has increased around 8 percent per year for the last three years, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Likewise, China has steadily increased its annual government expenditures on education. This is really interesting. Just last year, it committed to having education spending equal to four percent of the GDP, representing an estimated $27 billion investment in education over the next five years.*

It's important that WE also invest in the education of OUR students, because in today's world, they'll be competing against students in the countries I just mentioned, and beyond.

To that end, MSDF is a founding partner and investor in the Texas High School Project, a $261 million dollar public/private partnership focused on improving high school graduation rates and increasing college access for high need students in major urban areas. Our foundation is investing in proven, results-driven programs and new, innovative efforts like the T-STEM initiative which will create 35 math/science academies serving 20,000 low income students.

The second point is that technology is also important as a delivery mechanism. Today's technology can help teachers deliver content to the classroom in an exciting and consistent way.

But all too often, walking into a modern-day classroom is like teleporting back to the 1950s.

Here's what we're doing to change that. At Dell, we're working with many innovative districts to combine wireless notebooks, interactive whiteboards, polling devices, document cameras, projectors and televisions to transform an ordinary classroom into an engaging, interactive learning environment.

In Australia, we're working with the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training to connect 40,000 students across the Outback using thousands of desktop and notebook computers.

And we're very excited about a project we're working on in Mexico. We're installing computers, software, interactive whiteboards, projectors and printers in more than 48,000 fifth and sixth grade classrooms.

In districts like Round Rock ISD -- right up the road -- we're working with schools to install what we call "Intelligent Classrooms."

Beyond just engaging students, these districts are building 21st century skills that they'll need to compete in today's global economy.

And then, perhaps what's most often overlooked is the third point……the role of technology as a management tool. One of the challenges facing today's educators is the abundance and complexity of the data required to manage a large enterprise and drive student achievement. Today, districts are actually overflowing with data, but it's mostly housed in a fragmented and outdated IT infrastructure. They don't have the tools or resources to translate that data into meaningful and actionable information.

Where data systems do exist, the progress is typically reported to the districts and states – not teachers – and that's usually months after it is collected. And the data often takes the form of an end-of-year assessment, which doesn't allow parents or teachers to understand student performance in real-time so they can make needed adjustments. Data systems should be improved to provide teachers with timely access to student progress so they can use that data to provide targeted, effective teaching and improve student achievement.

Ideally, districts would have access to:

- IT and business processes that ensure frequent data capture and access
- Various levels of data for use at the state, district, system, school, department and classroom levels.
- Strong assessment and curriculum systems that provide frequent assessments aligned to state curriculum
- A way of distilling data into user-friendly reports or scorecards (so you don't have too much data and too little information)
- And the training to ensure that teachers and staff can translate data into an action plan (e.g., How should this change my classroom instruction next week/next month/next semester?)

So here in Austin, our foundation is working on district-wide high school redesign with the Austin Independent School District and Superintendent Pat Forgione in partnership with the Gates Foundation. The focus in AISD is on improving data-driven decision making at the campus level.

They are developing and implementing a set of scorecards, tools, and professional development tools to help teachers and principals to better understand student needs, target students with differentiated instruction, and track the results so that high school redesign can achieve its goals of increased student performance.

At the state level, MSDF is launching a public-private partnership with TEA to roll out what we're calling "Tools for Teaching Excellence Statewide Pilot." There's your pilot program, Ross. The project will support the development and implementation of simplified scorecards and supporting processes and systems in six Texas school districts, which will provide teachers and professional personnel with better data to improve student performance.

I'm proud of these projects. But there's much more to do.

And it's not necessarily going to be easy. Providing education technology to all students comes with some fairly big challenges. How do we fund technology for all schools? How do we integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum? How do we assess whether a student has actually developed the skills they need?

This is territory just now being explored in many U.S. classrooms. And I'm the first to say that we don't have all the answers for making it happen. But we recognize that we're an important part of figuring it out.

Ross talked about creative ideas. To help generate ideas, we're launching a new online community today called Dell Ideastorm which empowers consumers to share their ideas with us on how to advance technology.

We couldn't think of a better place to announce this than here at the Education Summit, which symbolizes the power of listening…and more importantly, learning.

Within IdeaStorm, we've established an "Education" category, and we're inviting teachers from around the world to log on and share their ideas on how technology can improve education, now and going forward.

This outlet is a great way for Dell to hear directly from teachers, but it's also an online community where teachers, parents and students can exchange ideas and learn from each other.

You know, no matter which industry you come from, we all have a vested interest in education. The knowledge and skills of our citizen's impacts how you staff your business, how you market your products and services, and frankly, whether your customers are employed and can afford to the products you provide.

Perhaps more than any before it, the Internet Generation – our children today – are poised to leverage technology in revolutionary ways. But we have to work together so children can translate that technical proficiency from their personal lives to their school work, and then later to their careers.

I want to close by remembering Mrs. Darby again, since she reminds me of a quote by Henry Brooks Adams, who said "A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops".

All of you play a tremendous role in influencing the children of the Lone Star State and your impact will last a lifetime. As a fellow Texan, I can tell you that we're proud of what you do as educators, and I know that my wife, Susan, and I will always do our best to support your efforts.

Thank you.