Ministers of Education reviewing tablet computers

MAURITIUS – As Ministers of Education from across the Commonwealth arrive in Mauritius for their triennial meeting, they will each receive a seven-inch tablet computer, loaded with conference and background documents, introductory videos and demonstration software.

This innovative approach has been developed for the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM) by two its key planning partners: the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) – headquartered in Vancouver, Canada – and the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat, who are working with the Government of Mauritius in hosting the meeting.

The tablets are being presented, through funding provided by UNICEF Child Friendly Schools and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, as a “tool for learning” which represents a part of the future of education across the Commonwealth nations.

COL President, Professor Asha Kanwar has invited Ministers and Senior Officials to explore the tablets. “Tablet computers are a low-cost, high-impact device that holds unprecedented potential to bridge gaps and place learning in the hands of those who need it most. We hope it will inspire new thoughts and discussions on how this tool can be used to achieve our collective aim of transforming lives through equitable access to quality education”, she said.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development.

More … www.col.org/newsreleases
Reporting to Ministers of Education

The Commonwealth of Learning’s work is guided by comprehensive Three-Year Plans that are developed through extensive evaluation and consultation. COL’s new Three-Year Plan 2012-2015 has been approved by COL’s Board of Governors and will be presented at the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), in Mauritius in August 2012 for endorsement by Ministers.

The theme of COL’s new Three-Year Plan remains “Learning for Development”. This plan extends to 2015, the target date set for the achievement of a number of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). COL uses the internationally agreed MDGs, the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Commonwealth priorities of peace, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its framework for action.

www.col.org/3yp

Mission:
COL’s mission is to help governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using appropriate technologies, particularly those that support “open and distance learning” (ODL).

Strategic goals:
• Quality education for all Commonwealth citizens
• Human resource development in the Commonwealth
• Harnessing ODL and technologies to achieve development Goals

Impact statement:
• A substantial and equitable increase in the number of Commonwealth citizens acquiring the knowledge and skills for leading productive and healthy lives, through formal and non-formal open and distance learning opportunities

Open Educational Resources

The Commonwealth of Learning is strongly committed to the creation, adaptation and use of Open Educational Resources because they have the potential to increase access to education while cutting costs and improving quality. They are, therefore, an important element of COL’s mission of Learning for Development.

COL and UNESCO are leading an initiative to foster governmental support for OER. At the key event, the June 2012 World OER Congress, the Paris OER Declaration received approval from the Congress of experts and government representatives.

www.col.org/oerCongress

COL’s Policy on Open Educational Resources (OER)
www.col.org/progServ/policy/Pages/oer.aspx

– more stories –
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth:
Hundreds of teachers and officials have acquired advanced ICT skills through this 32-country network, which includes Mauritius. It produces and shares eCourses in skills-related areas within a new Transnational Qualifications Framework and links them together in a common portal.
COL Clipping: [www.col.org/clippingVUSSC](http://www.col.org/clippingVUSSC)
Web site and portal: [www.vussc.info](http://www.vussc.info)

Lifelong Learning for Farmers:
Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) is a successful grassroots model for increasing rural prosperity that uses ICT to link banks and universities to village communities to exploit new economic opportunities. It is now being implemented at scale by extending the use of knowledge info-mediaries. L3F is active in Mauritius.
COL Clipping: [www.col.org/clippingL3Farmers](http://www.col.org/clippingL3Farmers)
Web page: [www.col.org/L3Farmers](http://www.col.org/L3Farmers)

Open Schooling:
Growing success in achieving universal primary education is creating a surge of demand for secondary schooling that many governments cannot afford to satisfy by building more schools. Open Schooling can deliver quality education cost-effectively at scale.
OER Course Materials: [www.col.org/resources/crsMaterials/osoer](http://www.col.org/resources/crsMaterials/osoer)
Web page: [www.col.org/OpenSchooling](http://www.col.org/OpenSchooling)

Teacher Education:
Achieving the MDGs and EFA will require millions of new teachers and on-the-job training for millions more unqualified teachers already in post. Teacher education institutions will not be able meet these demands without adopting the methods of ODL and COL will help them do this.
Teacher Education: The Role of Open and Distance Learning: [www.col.org/TeacherEd_roleODL](http://www.col.org/TeacherEd_roleODL)
Web page: [www.col.org/TeacherEducation](http://www.col.org/TeacherEducation)

Technical and Vocational Skills Development
COL assists with the development of policy for the use of ODL in skills development, notably for the informal economy, and works with partners to design and deliver quality courses that are increasingly rich in ICT. Partnerships among institutions at different stages of development operate in a spirit of south-south cooperation.
Web page: [www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment](http://www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment)

Healthy Communities
COL’s media empowerment model has proven its effectiveness for bringing health messages to communities. It is now being scaled up by training health groups and communities to create and share learning materials and make effective use of community media, especially community radio.
Web page: [www.col.org/HealthyCommunities](http://www.col.org/HealthyCommunities)
Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia: [www.cemca.org](http://www.cemca.org)

– more stories –
Higher Education
Many universities face burgeoning demand after a period of neglect and some countries are creating open universities. COL facilitates the expansion of quality higher education and the sharing of programmes among institutions, with a special focus on helping institutions adopt cost-effective quality assurance processes.
Web page: www.col.org/HigherEducation

More about COL:
The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL helps developing Commonwealth countries to increase access to learning using distance education and appropriate technologies.

Through its own resources and its extensive networks, COL provides a wealth of services and collaborative opportunities for policy makers, institutions and distance education practitioners. COL promotes policies and systems to make innovation sustainable and works with international partners to build models, create materials, enhance organisational capacity and nurture networks that facilitate learning in support of development goals.

COL’s mission is to help governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using appropriate technologies, particularly those that support “open and distance learning” (ODL). The application of technology through ODL techniques has shown its power and value in many countries and for many purposes.

Further information:
COL’s website: www.col.org
Quick Picks for the media: www.col.org/news/media (this document is available here)
News releases: www.col.org/newsreleases
COL Clippings: www.col.org/clippings
Connections newsletter: www.col.org/connections
COL blog: www.col.org/blog
COL resources: www.col.org/resources

Contacts:
Media liaison at 18CCEM: Dave Wilson, www.col.org/dwilson Local mobile: 230 971 4769

Spokespersons and onsite personalities:
- The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Chair of COL’s Board: www.col.org/bwhiteman
- Professor Asha Kanwar, President and C.E.O.: www.col.org/akanwar and www.col.org/speeches
- Dr. K. Balasubramanian, Education Specialist, Agriculture and Livelihoods: www.col.org/kbala
- Mr. John Lesperance, Education Specialist, Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth: www.col.org/jlesperance