

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Initiative

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Initiative (21S) is a US\$80 million, three-year, multi-phase education initiative that aims to create a sustainable, scalable, and replicable model for education reform through the implementation of transformative technology, tools, and training.

### Background

After Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast region in August 2005, Cisco Chairman and CEO, John Chambers, unveiled a \$80 million initiative to assist in community rebuilding efforts while simultaneously creating a blueprint for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. In addition to improving the quality of education in Mississippi and Louisiana, 21S aims to provide a holistic approach to education reform that will transform learning opportunities throughout the United States and beyond.



A teacher at Oak Grove Elementary School uses an interactive whiteboard to engage students in learning

### Conceptual Approach

The programs created within 21s incorporate people, processes, and technology to deliver sustainable, scalable, and replicable solutions. Primary objectives fall into three categories:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning: Develop a vision of student capabilities for the twenty-first century, establish benchmarks, and align with community goals for economic development
- Program and Development: Perform a gap analysis, identify opportunities for improved student outcomes, and develop metrics and assessments
- Enabling Technology: Select best technologies to support programs, leaders, and teachers; achieve 100 percent baseline connectivity; and move from integration to transformation

To accomplish these objectives, Cisco provides program support and expertise through the Leadership Fellows Program. Each year of the initiative, a team of 21S Fellows works directly with 50 schools in eight participating school districts to assist in the implementation of 21S components.

**“The 21S initiative is about empowering our children to thrive in the twenty-first century economy, with the Gulf Coast schools as our catalyst.”**

—John Chambers, Chairman and CEO, Cisco

### 21S Components

21S utilizes a holistic approach to transforming education that aims to establish each school as the hub of its community. To accomplish this goal, the 21S Fellows provide support in the areas of Connected Schools, Connected Learning, and Connected Communities. “We developed this approach to provide the components necessary to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment and extend learning beyond the walls of the school,” explains Beth Bellemore, 21S Fellow.

Connected Schools supports the physical aspects of education delivery such as instructional

technologies and advanced networking equipment. Connected Learning provides training and support for technology integration and improved pedagogy and administrative processes, and Connected Communities encourages interaction and collaboration between schools and parents, local businesses, and community organizations.

### Critical Success Factors

Each component of 21S is dependant upon three critical success factors:

- **Leadership:** Create a shared vision of an engaging, student-focused learning environment through discussions with superintendents, principals, and teachers
- **Professional Development:** Provide continuous, job-embedded learning that integrates enhanced pedagogy, technology, and administrative processes
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology:** Deploy appropriate technologies, equipment, and methods to transform education and extend learning into the community

The 21S Fellows apply business acumen to 21S learning solutions to ensure that new programs are cost-effective, align with each school's educational goals, and produce measurable results. The programs are also evaluated by the Education Development Center (EDC) and refined as needed.

### Partnerships

Cisco has developed a unique partnership with Digital Opportunity Trust, a nonprofit organization that promotes socioeconomic development, to establish a 21S Internship Program. Interns receive leadership and IT training to assist teachers in developing projects that integrate technology to help engage students and improve learning outcomes.

Cisco has also partnered with government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and experts across multiple disciplines to support various components of 21S, such as community outreach, classroom technologies, and lesson plans.

### Impact

Core infrastructure upgrades have dramatically improved network response times, reliability, and robustness at 21S schools. Using this foundation, Cisco advanced technologies such as voice, video, and mobility have helped create a 21st century learning environment. Teachers can now leverage a host of unified communication applications to engage students, collaborate with parents, and exchange ideas with peers.

As of October 2007, nearly 3000 teachers have received leadership training, eighteen fellows have supported the implementation of 21S components, and more than 30,000 students have participated in connected learning programs.



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