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Pearson Foundation Partners with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Create Digital Learning Programs

Grant from Gates Foundation will help create comprehensive instructional system to prepare America's students to meet Common Core State Standards

(New York, NY, April 27, 2011) -- The Pearson Foundation today announced a partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support America's teachers by creating a full series of digital instructional resources. Online courses in math and reading/English language arts will offer a coherent and systemic approach to teaching the new Common Core State Standards. Common Core Standards were developed by the National Governors Association, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers. Forty-one states, two territories, and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards.

Unique and original, this project is dedicated to creating a complete, foundational system of instruction built around the Common Core Standards. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will provide funding and research to support this partnership.

Over the next three years, the Pearson Foundation will develop 24 courses covering math for grades K-10 and reading/English language arts for grades K-12. The courses will enable teachers and students to access the latest and most effective digital learning technologies as they prepare to meet the internationally benchmarked college readiness goals of the Common Core Standards.

"This project is an innovative way to support teachers by providing tools they need to help students meet the new standards," said Vicki Phillips, Director of Education, College Ready, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "The Pearson Foundation has assembled an amazing international team to meet the goals articulated by the new Common Core Standards. We look forward to partnering in the development and dissemination of these much needed resources."

"The development of the Common Core Standards has set a high bar for public education in America," said Pearson Chief Executive Marjorie Scardino. "With the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Pearson Foundation, we'll aim high to devise courses that will engage teachers and students and try to help a new generation compete in a demanding world economy."

Complementing the instructional system, additional resources may also be developed including those from third-party curriculum providers whose solutions offer the greatest potential for student success. The courses will be made available in 2013, before the Common Core Standards are implemented. Funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will support four courses to be offered as free, open educational resources, with the intent of widening access and spurring innovation around the Common Core.

Pearson, the nation's leading education technology company, will offer these courses to school districts, complete with new services for in-person professional development for teacher transition to the Common Core and next generation assessment. The Pearson Foundation will also work with other partners to explore opportunities for additional commercial development and distribution.

Judy Coddling, former President and CEO of America's Choice, is leading the course development effort. Phil Daro, chairperson of the Common Core Mathematics college and career readiness standards work group, and Sally Hampton, chairperson of the Common Core Reading/English Language Arts college and career readiness standards work group, will oversee the course design and development teams. Susan Sclafani, former counselor to Secretary of Education Rod Paige and Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, will play a major role in coordinating this initiative. Educators and researchers from leading universities will also have an active role in designing and developing these courses.

“These new courses will be the first designed from the bottom up to meet the new learning goals established by the Common Core Standards,” said Pearson Foundation President, Mark Nieker. “These goals are essential to make sure American students have the best chance possible to succeed when they graduate high school. The courses will be developed to increase student engagement and will focus on the essential understanding of the concepts that inform Math and Language Arts. The key learning behaviors of collaboration, the appropriate use of technology, and real-world engagement—that educators agree are already defining college and workforce success—are integrated with the content.”

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The Pearson Foundation

The Pearson Foundation extends Pearson's (NYSE: PSO) commitment to education by partnering with leading nonprofit, civic, and business organizations to provide financial, organizational, and publishing assistance across the globe. The Foundation aims to make a difference by sponsoring innovative educational programs and extending its educational expertise to help in classrooms and in local communities. www.pearsonfoundation.org.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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