

**Speech by Jessica Tan, MD, Microsoft Singapore  
ITE-Microsoft Education Alliance Agreement Signing  
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Mr Bruce Poh, Director & CEO, ITE

Dr Ricky Tam, Principal, ITE College East

My colleague Chris Pirie, General Manager, Microsoft Learning

Distinguished educators and guests

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here to sign an Education Alliance Agreement between Microsoft and the Institute of Technical Education. Today, ITE joins more than 6,000 Microsoft IT Academies worldwide that provide curriculum and IT skills training to students so they can reach their academic and career potential.

ITE is the first institute of higher learning in Singapore to become an Education Alliance partner, with the goal of becoming the first Singapore IT Academy to become an open Prometric testing center. This is an important part of maintaining Singapore's innovation ecosystem.

I wanted to talk specifically about something that is very close to our hearts in Singapore. And that is the nurturing of a local talent pool and future tech entrepreneurs. Under the ITE-EAA, Microsoft will provide certification and training to build overall IT skills and capabilities for students looking to improve their employability and further their careers in fields such as software development, network management and systems engineering. And these are critical IT skill areas for any innovative knowledge-based economy.

The economic downturn notwithstanding, it is clear that Singapore's competitiveness continues to be deeply tied to the skills of its workforce. The depth and pool of IT skills is a very important aspect of our future as a hub for innovation and talent. As an industry leader, Microsoft is elevating our engagements locally to ensure that our programs contribute to a vibrant local software economy.

Over the last few years, Microsoft has made great strides to ensure we have a continuum of programs to address the need for IT skills from the very young through our Partners in Learning programs, to tertiary students with DreamSpark and Imagine Cup, and then to Early Start-ups with BizSpark and all the way to fully fledged software development companies.

These programs essentially provide easy access to Microsoft technology as well as global access to experts in their fields to nurture future leaders. To date, thousands of students and a few hundred start-up firms and software companies are benefiting from these programs.

I dare say, this is the most comprehensive range of programs by any company.

However, we cannot do this alone. Public-Private Partnerships, like our partnership with ITE today, is a crucial part of that plan. I have been personally involved with the ITE programs for some time now, and am really impressed by the quality and creativity of its students. In Singapore's knowledge-driven economy, we need all the bright & brave young talent we can get, to address the demands for future opportunities and to be involved in creating new markets for Singapore's future economic growth.

An IDC report commissioned by Microsoft was able to quantify that for every Sing dollar of revenue Microsoft gains, the local IT ecosystem gains S\$8 in revenue. And we hope to see this continue to grow as the economy improves and opportunities for growth and new businesses emerge.

It is our goal to enable members of our community with the power of technology. I've seen this in action myself - helping young companies when they need it most with free or low-cost software, introductions to investors and go-to market support. Here in Singapore, start-ups like GameMo and Shownearby.com are beneficiaries of BizSpark support and now stand a better chance of long-term success.

Equipping future workforces with a depth of IT skills is a first step in that direction. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to partner with ITE. Together we will help support Singapore's standing as the IT hub of Asia and give our students the advantages of training, certification and technical know-how that will help them succeed in tomorrow's technology-empowered job market.

Thank you