

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

February 27, 2009

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **IBM donates 600 KidSmart computer centers to PACER for young children with disabilities Tulare County Child Care Educational Program receives technology and teaching curriculum for seven centers**

*Visalia:* IBM donated 600 KidSmart Young Explorer computer learning centers to preschool programs nationwide to help children with disabilities and their classmates build skills for future academic success.

Included in this award are seven computers for the Tulare County Office of Education's Child Care Educational Program. The Tulare County Office of Education was one of only three programs in California to receive the learning centers. In Tulare County, the computers have been placed at the following Child Care Centers: the Senaida Garcia Center (in Visalia), Cutler #2, Dinuba #2, Maple (in Tulare), North Visalia #1, Terra Bella and Woodville.

"We are delighted to receive these valuable learning tools," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "The positive impact the computers will have in developing young minds intellectually and socially cannot be overstated."

The donation was made to PACER Center, a national organization for parents and professionals working with children with disabilities, such as autism, vision loss or other learning disabilities and physical impairments. PACER works with groups including the National Head Start Association and federally-

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funded Parent Centers to deploy the computer learning centers and training, expecting to reach nearly 20,000 children this year.

“With our youngest children increasingly becoming tech savvy, it is important that all children have equal access to technology in today’s digital age,” said Paula Goldberg, executive director at PACER. “We have seen how technology in the classrooms can be used to not only help children learn, but also how it can be used to break down divisions between kids with and without disabilities.”

IBM’s KidSmart program, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, includes the Young Explorer, a computer housed in brightly-colored, kid-hardened Little Tikes furniture and equipped with award-winning educational software to help children learn and explore concepts in math, science and language. The computer centers can also help children learn important socialization skills such as how to work together and sharing. Exploration and socialization skills are important to prepare children for future success in school, help level the playing field and ensure all children have access to educational tools. The KidSmart program also includes teacher and parent training material critical for education. The KidSmart website <http://www.kidsmartearlylearning.org/>, provides information for teachers and parents on early childhood learning and technology.

“The National Head Start Association and PACER are natural partners as we both believe that children must have the opportunity to succeed in this changing world,” said Michael McGrady, interim executive director of the National Head Start Association (NHSA). “Head Start and NHSA are excited to work with PACER and IBM to bring computers and computer training to the Head Start classrooms. Our partnership will lead to our students being better prepared to excel in school.”

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IBM developed the KidSmart program a decade ago to help reduce the digital divide, especially in urban areas, where it was becoming apparent that children from less affluent backgrounds could benefit from access to specialized technology tools and educational materials to better prepare them to enter school. Since then, more than 100,000 teachers have been trained on how to use the programs effectively in the classroom. IBM estimates that millions of children worldwide have used a Young Explorer computer. Based on the success of the program in the United States, IBM expanded the program to 60 countries around the world with tremendous success and translated the educational software into 30 languages. In several countries such as Vietnam, China, India and Jordan, it has become fully integrated into national education programs and has served as the model for teacher training.

For more information about IBM, please visit: [www.ibm.com](http://www.ibm.com)

For more information about PACER, please visit [www.PACER.org](http://www.PACER.org)

For more information about the Tulare County Office of Education's Child Care Educational Program, visit [www.tcoe.org](http://www.tcoe.org) or call (559) 651-3035.

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Rel: 11/09