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Microsoft Applauds Windows XP - Linux Marriage on the XO Laptops

And the imminent start of XP on XO pilot programs

Microsoft is not shy of going after the next 5 billion of potential Windows users in the world, with its proprietary operating system having already achieved an install base larger than 1 billion people. In this context, the Redmond company will get a piggyback ride from One Laptop per Child (OLPC) via the XO laptop, a machine originally planned to run Linux exclusively. As of May 15, Microsoft and OLPC have inked an official agreement designed to make Windows XP available on XO laptops, with the first trials scheduled to debut as early as June 2008. Furthermore, the Redmond company has made public its intentions to play well with Linux on XO. "Transforming education is a fundamental goal of Microsoft Unlimited Potential, our ambitious effort to bring sustained social and economic opportunity to people who currently don't enjoy the benefits of technology", said Craig Mundie, chief research and strategy officer at Microsoft. Both OLPC and the Redmond company will collaborate with governments and nongovernmental organizations in order to deliver XO laptops to the world's poorest children. "By supporting a wide variety of affordable computing solutions for education, that includes OLPC's XO laptop, we aim to make technology more relevant, accessible and affordable for students everywhere", Mundie added. Following the pilot programs set up to test Windows XP on XO that will kick start next month, the finalized machines will be available no later than August or September 2008. Microsoft has worked for over a year in order to make XP available on XO machines, with the most consistent barriers related to the computers' limited SD card. In this regard, the Redmond company had to write not only new drivers but also a BIOS in order to get XP to integrate on XO. At first, end users will have the possibility of acquiring XO laptops with either Linux and the Sugar XO interface, or with Windows XP and benefit from the environment of software solutions built around Microsoft's platform. Additionally in the future, OLPC will provide not only more flash storage but also a new BIOS that will permit Windows XP and Linux to coexist on the same laptops in Dual Boot configurations. "From the beginning, the goal of OLPC has been to use technology to transform education by bringing connectivity and constructionist learning to the poorest children throughout the world", added Nicholas Negroponte, founder and chairman of OLPC. "Today's announcement, coupled with future plans for a dual boot version of the XO laptop, enhances our ability to deliver on this vision. In addition, OLPC will work with third parties to port its user interface, called 'Sugar,' to Windows."