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Achieve

Spring 2018

The latest news from Cambridge Assessment, the University's international exams group.
cambridgeassessment.org.uk

Unlocking the power of questions in education

Questions have a powerful and fundamental role to play in education, a conference has heard.

More than 100 people attended Cambridge Assessment's flagship autumn event, Questioning Questions, with around 1,000 more taking part online.

The engaged and appreciative audience heard from education experts including research teacher Daisy Christodoulou and academic Professor Bill Lucas in a conference that ranged far and wide in the debate over how to use questions to power education.

Michael O'Sullivan CMG, Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment International Education, opened the event by saying questions are vital in education "because they make us think, they make us state what we know and don't know". He said questions enable teachers to see into learners' minds and understand what they have understood and what areas need more work.

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Evelina Galaczi, of Cambridge Assessment English, said technology could do some things teachers were unable to, but teachers brought skills to the class that technology could not.

News in brief

Diversity champion



A digital expert from Cambridge Assessment English has won an award for his work in championing diversity at the organisation. Andrew Nye, who heads up the Digital and New Product Development team at Cambridge English, was

awarded the *Best Champion of Change of the Year Award* which is part of the Lead5050 Women in International Education awards. Andrew blogged about the award on the networking website LinkedIn. "When we talk about diversity at Cambridge Assessment, we mean it in the widest sense of valuing everyone, and celebrating the diverse range of talents, perspectives, skills and experience each person brings to the organisation," he said.

Top teachers are conference-bound



Three teachers from Spain, Brazil and Russia won Cambridge Assessment English scholarships to attend a major conference. The teachers were funded to attend the annual International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) conference that was held in Brighton, UK, this April. María Dolores Gómez Gómez, an English teacher from Spain, won the Digital Teacher Scholarship. The winner of the John Trim Scholarship was Natália de Castro Guerreiro, an Aviation English Assessment Co-ordinator for the Brazilian Air Force. The Dr Peter Hargreaves Scholarship was awarded to Svetlana Bogolepova, Associate Professor at the National Research University, Higher School of Economics in Moscow.

Prestigious Paris university joins English club

France's prestigious École Polytechnique recently became the 8,000th institution to recognise a leading English test.

The Paris-based university will now accept C1 Advanced for admissions to its undergraduate degree courses. It joins educational institutions, business and government departments around the world who accept the exam as proof of high-level achievement in learning English.

C1 Advanced has already achieved near-100 per cent recognition for university admissions in the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, with recognition growing in Canada and the US. It is also widely accepted by businesses and government departments worldwide.



Saul Nassé has been appointed as the new Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment.

New CEO looks forward

The University of Cambridge has announced the appointment of Saul Nassé as the new Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment.

He succeeds Simon Lebus, who is stepping down after 15 years, during which time the Group has grown into one of the world's leading assessment and education services organisations.

Saul has been the Chief Executive of the Cambridge Assessment English business for the last four years, accelerating its move to digital and delivering growth across the world. He has been responsible for IELTS, the English exam that Cambridge produces in partnership with the British Council and IDP, and has launched a number of joint products in a strategic partnership with Cambridge University Press.

Before joining Cambridge Assessment, Saul was Controller of BBC Learning, responsible for the corporation's education programmes and websites, including Bitesize,

BBC Food and the multiplatform event, Stargazing Live. Saul studied Natural Sciences at Robinson College, Cambridge and spent three years as a research scientist at Cranfield University.

Saul said: "This is an exciting time for Cambridge Assessment, and I am delighted to have been asked to take on this role. Together with our colleagues at Cambridge University Press, we have an enormous impact on students' lives in the UK and around the world.

"I believe we have the chance to increase that impact, combining our assessment skills with emerging technologies like machine learning. We have a committed and knowledgeable team at Cambridge Assessment, and with access to expertise across the University and Cambridge University Press we can create innovative new experiences for learners."

Anthony Odgers, Chairman of the University board to which both Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press answer, said: "Saul has a great track record at Cambridge Assessment English, working closely with the Press and other partners to deliver growth and new digital products. He has a global outlook and a real belief in education's power to change lives, which make him the ideal person to realise Cambridge Assessment's ambitions."

Saul took up his new position on 16 April.

Prison success for exam board

A leading UK exam board has been chosen by the UK's Ministry of Justice to provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) qualifications to adult learners in England's prisons from August 2018.

OCR was successful in its bid to be the exclusive provider of qualifications in this subject area, which is crucial for employability and everyday life.

The contract reflects the breadth of OCR's Computing (ICT, Digital Literacy and Computer Science) qualification range. Centres providing prison education will be able to

choose from OCR's Entry Level to Level 3 qualification range which includes Functional Skills, IT User Skills (ITQ), Cambridge Technicals, GCSE and A Level. This offers both vocational and academic options to suit all learners.

Peter Canning, OCR Product Director, said: "The majority of prisons already use OCR qualifications and prison learning is an important sector we support and understand well. We are delighted to be able to bring our expertise to make sure ICT qualifications can be delivered



to learners as easily as possible with a package of flexible and high-level support. We believe it's vital that prisoners have the opportunity to develop their ICT skills and have their learning recognised."

Continued from page 1



The event then heard the latest research in the field, carried out by Cambridge Assessment's Martin Johnson, Simon Child and Vicki Crisp. Martin explained that for questions to work, they must be rule-bound, and explored whether summative exam questions could be 'repurposed' for formative use in the classroom. Simon said questions were a powerful resource, but had to be carefully designed in order to fulfil their rich potential. Vicki gave a number of examples of questions that could affect how learners understand or respond, explaining that students build up expectations about how they should answer questions.

Evelina Galaczi, of Cambridge Assessment English, addressed the role of technology in teaching and learning, saying that there was a tension between its expansive and reductive abilities. She said technology could do some things teachers were unable to, but teachers brought skills to the class that technology could not, including generating interaction and engaging with higher order thinking skills such as evaluation.

In the afternoon the event heard from Microsoft Research's Simon Peyton Jones, who is running a project which aims to crowd source questions from around the

globe. Free of charge, the resource aims to enable teachers to save time and effort by sharing effective questions to develop students' learning. Cambridge Assessment's Group Director of Assessment Research and Development, Tim Oates CBE, is one of the key figures behind the project.

The afternoon session saw a keynote speech from Daisy Christodoulou, who said that in some classrooms in the UK, teachers have been "doing the equivalent of expecting children to run a marathon in every lesson", using summative assessment too frequently as a learning tool. She called instead for more frequent, formative, assessment of subsets of the skills and knowledge needed (the 'training' for the marathon), perhaps using multiple-choice questions which she said often had an unfair reputation but could in fact be a valuable learning tool.

In his presentation, Professor Bill Lucas explained how he is co-chairing a review into how creative thinking might be assessed in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests in 2021. He said that while it was important that students learn the basics of knowledge, questions must help them acquire character and capabilities, and must unleash the power of learners' curiosity.



You can view a highlights video as well as all the presentations on the Cambridge Assessment website at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/questioning-questions.

France puts English at heart of plans for international trade

France's Prime Minister Édouard Philippe has announced plans to offer internationally recognised English language qualifications, as part of the French government's strategy to boost exports.

In a speech to management students in Lille, M. Philippe stressed that improving language skills is essential to reversing the country's long-standing trade deficit. Acknowledging that English is the 'first language' of globalisation and an essential life skill, the Prime Minister announced that the French state will fund internationally recognised language qualifications 'of the Cambridge, IELTS [International English Language Testing System] type' for all students graduating from high school and university.

Hervé Marc, Regional Director for Cambridge Assessment English in Europe, said: "France has always had an enviable education system which produces rigorous thinkers, equipped with an impressive body of knowledge. We have been less successful, though, in teaching and learning languages, and far too many students complete their education without a sufficiently robust command of a foreign language to be able to interact easily in a corporate environment. The Cambridge English qualifications are specifically designed to encourage the development of real-life communication skills."



Cambridge English produces English language certification taken by more than five million people worldwide every year, including the Cambridge English Qualifications, BULATS and IELTS. The Cambridge English Certificate is already well established in the French education system, where it is taken by more than 40,000 students in 'Seconde Section Européenne'.

A view from...

Simon Lebus

Continuity and change



I remember on arrival at Cambridge Assessment being warned about the potential online testing had for disrupting our business and also about the opportunity technology offered

to develop richer and more engaging questions that would stimulate learning and improve the student experience. Nearly 16 years on some progress has been made in this direction but it has been fairly limited as there are many hurdles still to be overcome.

However, one particularly exciting facility technology affords is the construction of increasingly large and well-calibrated item banks which can be deployed by teachers in their day-to-day teaching. A good example of this is ExamBuilder, a joint project between OCR and Hodder, which gives teachers access to a large number of old OCR exam papers from which they can construct practice tests. Cambridge Assessment has also cooperated with the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge which has developed Isaac Physics using sample O Level, GCSE and A Level questions dating back to the early 1950s, along with a whole range of specially developed supporting materials, as an invaluable instructional resource.

Whether on or offline, one of the big tensions in question paper setting and the developing of exam items is the need to make sure that they are clear, to the point, and that somebody answering the question will understand exactly what it is they are being asked.

This year Cambridge Assessment set just under 34,000 questions for its summer A Level and GCSE series, so making sure that questions are clear and easily understood is critical, not least as we very quickly know if they are not because of feedback through social media. Good-quality questions are also a powerful teaching resource. Technology offers the possibility ultimately of dynamically combining learning and assessment material so as to be able to observe and monitor individual student performance over the entirety of a course of study, so that mastery of a subject discipline or skill could be certificated based on continuous observation. We are still a long way off from achieving that particular (and not necessarily wholly desirable) technological sunlit upland, but what is certain is that it will never be achieved without mastery of the technically demanding and complex human skill of being able to formulate good, clear questions.

Simon Lebus ran Cambridge Assessment between 2002 and 2018, a period which saw some massive changes in education and assessment. He is currently pursuing a range of non-executive interests.

Sharing best practice in Penang

A major international conference in Malaysia has brought together representatives from leading organisations in Asia, Australasia and Europe to share best practice in assessing healthcare students and professionals in order to help enhance the healthcare sector.

Co-hosted by Cambridge Assessment English, Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing and OET (Occupational English Test), the Penang conference *From admissions to employment: Optimising the healthcare sector in Asia* focused on the recruitment and training of healthcare professionals, while also looking to the future.

Andy Chamberlain, head of Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, said: "Universities, institutions, governments and recruiters around the world must have confidence in healthcare professionals to deliver quality



Traditional dancers entertained delegates at the Optimising the Healthcare Sector in Asia conference in Penang, Malaysia, last November.

medical services. They have the power to lead tomorrow's advances in medicine. We need to ensure that within this ever-changing field, those future professionals have the attributes for these challenging careers."

One of the highlights of the two-day event was an address delivered by YB Dr Afif Bahardin, Penang Minister of Agriculture, Agro-Based Industry, Health and Rural Development.

Universities represented at the Conference included the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, Melbourne Australia, the University of Malaya and UCSI University, Singapore's Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and Thailand's Thammasat University. They were joined by the Penang State Tourism Development and Culture Exco, Penang Island's City Council, Singapore's Institute of Mental Health and the British High Commission.

Going for gold

The world's leading youth achievement award is set to become available in more schools across the globe.

Cambridge Assessment International Education is now working with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation to help create more opportunities for Cambridge schools to offer the Award. Cambridge International says it believes that the Award provides excellent learning experiences that complement its programmes and qualifications.

Many Cambridge schools are already offering the Award, such as ACG Strathallan, in New Zealand. Its

Deputy Principal Robyn Pryor said: "We initially introduced the Award in 2003 to provide students with an opportunity to develop a number of core skills such as leadership, teamwork and confidence. It supports our aim of providing students with a holistic education which complements the academic Cambridge programmes we offer. We find that international students in particular gain a great deal from their participation. Many create new friendships and experience new things."

Sarah Summerscales, a former student who achieved the Gold level of the Award, said: "The programme teaches so many life skills that are invaluable to many aspects of life. Looking back five years after completing my Gold Award, it was one of the best things I could have done."

Ivy League success for Cambridge new joiner

A US high school that introduced Cambridge programmes to raise standards has sent its first student to an Ivy League university.

In 2011, just 20 per cent of students were deemed college- or career-ready at Fairdale High School in Louisville, Kentucky. The school needed a new approach to help students engage with their learning, and chose to work with Cambridge Assessment International Education.

Brad Weston, Assistant Superintendent of school district Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky, said: "Raising our standards and adopting a rigorous, internationally benchmarked curriculum has had an incredible impact on all our students and the school's academic culture. Our students see their peers reaching higher than ever before, achieving bigger and better things each year. They see that they, too, can achieve at high levels. They see possibilities."

Every one of Fairdale's Cambridge students from the classes of 2016 and 2017 graduated 'college-ready' and made a successful move to a post-secondary institution.



Students from ACG Strathallan school on their Bronze Award expedition.

Seal of approval for English test

Internationally trained doctors, nurses and midwives who want to register and work in the UK and Ireland are now able to take an English language test designed specifically for healthcare professionals.

The General Medical Council and the Medical Council, which regulate doctors in the UK and Ireland respectively, will routinely accept OET – the Occupational English Test – as proof of English proficiency for registration.

“The test materials have been produced to an extremely high standard, are authentic and valid, and highly relevant to day-to-day practice in the UK.”



The Nursing and Midwifery Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland have also formally recognised the test.

OET Chief Executive Officer, Sujata Stead, said: “What sets OET apart from other tests is that it is designed for healthcare. We use real communication scenarios, similar to the ones healthcare professionals encounter every day.

“Regulators and employers can feel confident that healthcare professionals who have achieved the required level in OET for their profession can communicate effectively in the healthcare workplace.”

OET is run jointly by Cambridge Assessment English and Australia’s Box Hill Institute. Already recognised

by authorities in Australia, Dubai, New Zealand and Singapore, the well-established test is widely used in the registration of overseas-trained healthcare professionals.

Martyn Partridge, Professor of Respiratory Medicine at Imperial College, London, recently reviewed OET materials for medicine.

He said: “The test materials have been produced to an extremely high standard, are authentic and valid, and highly relevant to day-to-day practice in the UK.”

The Occupational English Test is currently available every month in more than 100 locations in 40 countries. For more information go to www.occupationalenglishtest.org.

Tim gets top education prize

Tim Oates CBE has been given a major industry award for his contribution to education.

EducationInvestor magazine, a leading publication for professionals advising, investing or operating within the education sector, gave Tim the ‘Outstanding Contribution by an Individual’ award at a ceremony in London.

Tim, who has been with Cambridge Assessment since May 2006, has advised the UK government for many years on both practical matters and assessment policy, in particular chairing the review of the National Curriculum in England. His latest work includes efforts to encourage the return of high-quality textbooks in England’s classrooms and the publication of *A Cambridge Approach to Improving Education*.

Tim said: “I’m delighted and honoured to be given this award, which is recognition of all the work which Cambridge Assessment does to support high-quality education.”

Tim was presented with his award by historian and educationalist Sir Anthony Seldon, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham.

Commenting on the award, the judges said: “In an increasingly competitive and complex global education environment, Tim has become a trusted adviser in education policy, curriculum, assessment and accountability reform to governments around the world. Bringing the insights of considerable international experience and mastery of a challenging evidence base, his career has been marked by a consistent interest in improving public understanding of the challenges faced by educationists and of what works in school improvement.”

“I’m delighted and honoured to be given this award, which is recognition of all the work which Cambridge Assessment does ...”



Tim Oates CBE with the ‘Outstanding Contribution by an Individual’ award.

Seeing success: inside the world's top education systems

There are three key features of the world's top-performing education systems, a seminar has heard.

Over 100 people attended a Cambridge Assessment Network talk by Lucy Crehan, whose book *Cleverlands* chronicles her experiences observing the best educational practice from around the world.

In her presentation, Lucy said that while it was important not to 'cherry pick' from successful education systems, it was vital to note some of the reasons for their success. She said from her experience in Finland, Japan, Singapore, Shanghai and Canada, there were three stand-out features:

- **Teacher collaboration**

In Finland and East Asia teachers hold weekly joint timetabled planning of lessons, while in Japan, Singapore and Shanghai teachers add an additional step, observing lessons that they have created together.

- **Additional support**

In Finland and Canada additional qualified teachers are employed to support students in small pull-out groups, while in Japan, Shanghai and Singapore the class teacher gave extra support, either during the lesson, before or after.



- **Mastery curricula and approach**

In Shanghai, Singapore and Japan, fewer topics are covered initially, but in greater depth. The vast majority of pupils progress through the curriculum at the same pace, with the whole class moving on to the next topic only once every child is ready.

Lucy added that distinctive views of children's ability play a central role. This continues to be influenced by the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius: a belief that all children are capable of achieving high goals, depending on the way things are presented by the teacher and the effort which each child puts into learning it.

"If you don't believe that it's possible for all children to achieve high goals, then you're not really going to put in the effort to explain things properly," she said.

"You need to believe it's possible, and the children need to believe it's possible, and you need to want to learn – you need to believe it's valuable to learn."

Tim Oates CBE, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment – which sponsored Lucy's research – thanked Lucy for her talk, saying the book it was based on was an "extraordinary journey of an illuminating kind, informed by some of the best educational theory". Her talk was then followed by a wide-ranging question and answer session.



Above, Lucy Crehan, and below, Tim Oates CBE.

You can see a video of Lucy's talk at: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/seeing-success-inside-the-worlds-top-education-systems.

Thumbs-up for teaching course

A free course for secondary school subject teachers who deliver lessons in English but who don't have it as their first language has positive effects on students' subject and language learning, according to a study.

Research by the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education and its assessment department Cambridge Assessment found that people who took part in the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) *Teaching your subject in English* found the learning valuable.

The course helps teachers across the world build their confidence in teaching in English across a wide range of subjects, including maths, science and history. It explores different ways of using English in the classroom, including how to get students engaged in lessons, how to develop students' thinking skills, and how to use language to check students' learning.



Teachers are given opportunities to share their experience and expertise, to find out what works in the classroom for other teachers and to develop new ideas to use in different contexts. They also explore digital tools for teaching and learning.

The course, which is run by experts from across the Cambridge Assessment Group, was held most recently in February 2018. The results of the study, carried out in May 2017, will help to inform the development of similar support in the future.

"The course helps teachers across the world build their confidence in teaching in English across a wide range of subjects, including maths, science and history."

Goldilocks and the English exam

The average A Level English Literature student writes around 1,000 words per hour in an exam – or 17 words a minute, according to a study.

Researchers at Cambridge Assessment followed up an earlier study into the length of GCSE English Literature students' essays and found a similar 'Goldilocks effect' in which candidates should not write too little, but should not write too much either.

The researchers say they found examples of candidates who achieved full marks with fairly succinct answers, and examples where very long responses unfortunately resulted in a low grade. In one case, a student achieved an A* with two essays that were only three pages long, while at the other end of the spectrum, one candidate filled the entire length of their 11-page standard answer booklet, and four further extension booklets, but unfortunately ended up being awarded grade E.

"As with the GCSE analysis, quantity does not trump quality. The curve flattens off at around 1,300 words per essay, and so writing more than this isn't consistently associated with getting higher marks," researcher Tom Benton says.

The data came from a two-hour OCR A Level English Literature exam sat in June 2016. The lowest grade achievable in the exam (above a U) was grade E and candidates were required to supply two essay answers, each of which could be awarded a maximum of 30 marks. The word counts were collected by computer processing digital images of a sample of 5,010 handwritten scripts. The total word count was then halved to give the estimated word count per essay.

In the GCSE exam, candidates wrote around 13 words per minute on average, or roughly 800 words per hour. In the A Level exam the average student wrote 17 words per minute on average, or just over 1,000 words per hour. The researchers say the difference is to be expected as only the strongest candidates at GCSE, who tend to write more, will go on to take A Level. Additionally, A Level candidates will be two years older and have more experience in writing exams.

You can see the research on the Cambridge Assessment website at: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/goldilocks-effect-also-exists-at-a-level.

India deal is the business



The consultancy arm of Indian multinational Tata Group has signed a major agreement to administer Cambridge's computer-based Business English certificates throughout the country.

Under the deal with TCS iON, Cambridge Assessment English will leverage the company's Digital Assessment Platform's extensive, high-stakes assessment capability to conduct exams across the country.

Signing the agreement in New Delhi, India, Cambridge English's Chief Executive Saul Nassé said:

"The Cambridge Business English Certificates are well established in India, and are popular with both employers and universities. By teaming up with TCS, we can benefit from their excellent infrastructure and customer service to make it much easier for people across India to take an internationally recognised qualification that they can use all over the world to prove that they have the English language skills they need for success in the global economy."

Venguswamy Ramaswamy, Global Head, TCS iON said, "We are delighted to partner with Cambridge Assessment English. TCS iON is in the forefront of re-imagining assessment solutions and is globally leading the digital transformation in this space. We will bring reach and effectiveness to Cambridge English: Business Certificates across the country."

TCS iON has developed digital solutions that help conduct large-scale, high-stakes exams, while enabling institutions and exam bodies to effectively shorten the exam cycle. It does this with the support of high-quality computing infrastructure, a large distributed execution team and a robust digital platform. By teaming up with TCS iON, Cambridge Assessment English will make it much more convenient for learners and professionals from every state in India to take an internationally recognised Cambridge English: Business Certificate exam.



New Networking opportunities

Cambridge Assessment Network has unveiled its 2018 training and events programme, with notable additions including two new face-to-face courses.

Perceptions of e-assessment: the potential and the practicalities is being held on 4 July in Cambridge and *The place of taxonomies in question writing, paper setting, and assessment evaluation* is being held on 25 October in Cambridge.

A new online course *A101: Introducing the Principles of Assessment* is open for booking throughout the year, and can be accessed anywhere in the world. Other international opportunities include the Network's flagship residential courses the *Cambridge International Study Programme* (14–25 May) – a complete guide to the processes involved



Delegates on last year's Leadership in National Assessment course.

in the design and delivery of valid and robust examinations, and *Leadership in National Assessment* (8–12 October) – a unique senior leadership programme for international education specialists and executives.

In addition, the Cambridge Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Assessment and Examinations (PGCA) is now in its fourth year, offering a Master's-level qualification in educational assessment and examinations in partnership with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education.

For more information or to book your place on a course go to www.canetwork.org.uk.

A warm reception in China

Cambridge Assessment English's Regional Director East Asia, Min Qu, met with UK Prime Minister Theresa May on the latter's recent trade visit to China. Mrs May attended a reception at the British Ambassador's residence, where she chatted with Min Qu.



Min Qu, Cambridge Assessment English's Regional Director East Asia, pictured above and also right with UK Prime Minister Theresa May (centre).



Cambridge supports top education forum

The world's largest gathering of education and skills ministers has been held in London, supported by Cambridge as a platinum partner.

Over the course of three days, delegates at the Education World Forum heard a range of insights and inspiration from leading education pioneers, policy makers and experts, with many of the sessions given by education ministers themselves. England's newly appointed Education Secretary Damian Hinds chose the forum to give his first speech since taking up the role, hailing the potential of technology to cut teacher workload.

Cambridge Assessment International Education, Cambridge Assessment English and Cambridge University Press were platinum partners under the over-arching Cambridge brand. Rod Smith, Cambridge

University Press' Managing Director, Global Education, gave a keynote speech in which he talked about some of the key things to get right in education reform projects.



Numerous panel debates were held over the course of the three-day Education World Forum.

US debut for popular education conference



For the first time, a Cambridge Schools Conference is to take place in the United States. The theme of the conference, which is being held in Miami in June, is 'Learning and achievement for all'.

"I'm very excited that we are holding a conference here to bring schools together, and give teachers an opportunity to share knowledge and best practices with teachers in other countries," said Mark Cavone, Cambridge Assessment International Education's Regional Director, North America. "We are proud to serve and provide excellence in education to schools and districts in 31 states and the District of Columbia, giving more students the chance to follow a Cambridge pathway through school."

Watch this space

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Credits

Design: H2 Associates, Cambridge

Editorial: Hilary Fletcher

