



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SetPoint Names Michael E. Ward,
Former North Carolina State Superintendent, as Managing Director**

***Education Leader With More Than 30 Years of Experience
Will Guide New Consortium for Transforming Struggling Schools***

JACKSON, Miss. – Nov. 11, 2009 – SetPoint announced today that Dr. Mike Ward, former North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction, was named managing director of the newly launched consortium that offers a research-based approach for sustainable transformation of chronically low-performing schools. The SetPoint program changes learning environments without mass dismissals of staff, school closures or turnover to charters or outside management organizations. This initiative pairs classroom technology with intensive leadership and instructional coaching to build capacity for sustained change within the local district.

Ward brings a diverse background in all aspects of education to his role leading SetPoint. In his more than 30 year career, he has been a classroom teacher, coach, principal, superintendent and professor, as well as a state education leader.

SetPoint was formed by Renaissance Learning, the world's leading provider of computer-based assessment technology for pre-K–12 schools, and JBHM Education Group, a team of noted specialists in improving low-performing schools. During the 2010-11 school year, Ward will lead the SetPoint team in implementations initially focused on eight states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Mexico and Texas. Subsequent years will see expansion nationwide, Ward indicated.

“The opportunity to move the SetPoint initiative forward is a high point of my career,” said Ward. “My experience has taught me that strengthening leadership, improving teacher quality and creating a culture focused on learning are the keys to turning around schools. That is the very foundation of the SetPoint model for sustainable transformation of struggling schools into places where all students succeed. I look forward to working with school districts in the states that will pioneer this new approach next school year and to taking SetPoint nationwide in the near future.”

Ward is currently an associate graduate faculty member focusing on educational leadership at the University of Southern Mississippi. In 2004, he completed his second four-year term as state superintendent of the Public Schools of North Carolina. During that tenure, he served as the president of the Council of Chief State School Officers and as a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Nation's Report Card. Under Ward's leadership, the State of North Carolina was recognized for strong academic growth by national publications, such as "Education Week," and organizations such as the National Educational Goals Panel and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

"Mike brings the ideal combination of experience working with state and local education leaders, in educational assessment and in schools, to his new role as the managing director of SetPoint," said Terrance D. Paul, CEO, Renaissance Learning. "He will lead our team of education specialists as they work with communities around the country to realize the vision of transforming schools from within, using coaching and premier learning tools."

In the SetPoint program, most staff members remain in their positions and receive intensive coaching and modeling in best instructional practices from experienced principals and school leaders. Mentors are in the school daily to provide teachers, staff and administrators with the support they need to implement "Five Essential Practices" developed from research on effective instruction by leaders in school change, such as Larry Lezotte, Ph.D., of Effective Schools.

"With the addition of Mike Ward to our team, we are poised to launch SetPoint's work with chronically low-performing schools and help them successfully change behaviors of teachers, administrators and students," said Mike Walters, founder of JBHM and himself a former school superintendent. "The launch of our new initiative, Mike's willingness to lead it and the current availability of federal funding for transforming schools create the perfect storm for SetPoint to help schools around the country change their course."

SetPoint meets or exceeds criteria for federal funding under the "transformational" model for school change described in two programs of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA): the "Race to the Top" initiative and the newly expanded School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. SIG funding is aimed at the bottom five percent of U.S. schools, the group the SetPoint program of intensive intervention targets most directly. Together, the two programs will

provide about \$8 billion for school improvement. Both require that districts choose among four change models for low-performing schools: closing the school, turning it over to a charter or outside “educational management organization,” a “turnaround” process requiring the dismissal of at least half the faculty, or the transformation model.

For more information about SetPoint, go to www.setpointschools.com or call 866-505-2549.

About JBHM Education Group, LLC

Established in 2000 by a veteran school superintendent, JBHM began by helping districts struggling with the mandates of No Child Left Behind and quickly discovered that intensive hands-on assistance was required to help schools meet their achievement goals. They therefore developed detailed processes for monitoring and advancing the skills of school and district leaders and teachers. JBHM’s growing corps of specialists – all highly experienced superintendents, principals, teachers and specialists and highly trained and mentored in the JBHM process of improvement and coaching – provide services in school improvement, teacher coaching, special education and working with struggling learners. JBHM has worked with hundreds of schools in increasing academic rigor and instructional focus, demonstrating that sustainable achievement gains are possible once excuses for weak performance are left at the schoolhouse door.

About Renaissance Learning, Inc.

Renaissance Learning, Inc., is the world’s leading provider of computer-based assessment technology for pre-K–12 schools. Adopted by more than 74,000 schools, Renaissance Learning’s tools provide daily formative assessment and periodic progress-monitoring technology to enhance core curriculum, support differentiated instruction and personalize practice in reading, writing and math. Renaissance Learning products help educators make the practice component of their existing curriculum more effective by providing tools to personalize practice and easily manage the daily activities for students of all levels. As a result, teachers using Renaissance Learning products accelerate learning, get more satisfaction from teaching and help students achieve higher test scores on state and national tests. Renaissance Learning has seven U.S. locations and subsidiaries in Canada and the United Kingdom.

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