



FLORIDA LITERACY COALITION, INC.

PRESS RELEASE

934 N. Magnolia Ave
(407) 246-7110
Fax: (407) 246-7104

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida- August 6, 2009, Adults and families throughout the state will soon have access to new technology provided by **IBM** that can help adults and families improve their reading skills. The **Florida Literacy Coalition, Inc.** received a grant by IBM for the company's Reading Companion software which will be used by thirty-four Florida-based literacy programs, with a total in-kind value of \$340,000.

Reading Companion uses speech-recognition technology that "listens" to emerging readers speak and provides individualized feedback, enabling them to practice their pronunciation as they acquire fundamental reading skills. This Web-based technology was developed by IBM research and aims to improve English literacy skills. "The support of IBM enables programs throughout the state to employ breakthrough technology in the classroom, alongside traditional curriculum to help students achieve greater English literacy and language skills," said Greg Smith, Florida Literacy Coalition Executive Director. "We certainly appreciate IBM's generous support and commitment to literacy."

Programs benefiting from this technology grant comprise of community colleges, school districts, and non-profit literacy organizations (see attached list) located in twenty three counties throughout Florida. "Literacy is a key ingredient for students to be successful in school, perform in their jobs, and conduct their personal lives," said Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs Manager, Janell Ray. "IBM is proud to be part of Florida Literacy Coalition's, programs helping our adults and families gain the literacy skills needed to become more productive in their lives and in our society."

The Reading Companion software is effective because it is simple to use. Readers wear a headset microphone connected to a computer, and then select an e-book from the virtual library. As they read the book aloud, the software "listens" to their pronunciation and accuracy, and provides them with immediate feedback (e.g. That was great!). If they have difficulty with the words, they are gently encouraged to try again or receive a correct reading. In addition, participants are given a special ID and password that makes Reading Companion available to them on the Web, enabling them to continue lessons wherever and whenever they can access a computer.

Reading Companion also provides teachers with statistical results on how the new reader is progressing. IBM also introduced the "Book Builder" feature, enabling anyone to become an author by creating an e-book that becomes part of the e-library for students to use around the world.

Reading Companion uses innovative speech-recognition technology developed by IBM

researchers in partnership with teachers in IBM partner schools and not-for-profit organizations. It can be used in both primary schools as well as help adult learners to read. Currently, more than 700 schools and nonprofit organizations around the world are using Reading Companion in more than 27 countries.

[Click here to see a list of the Reading Companion Grant Recipients.](#)

About the Florida Literacy Coalition: Established in 1985, The Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) promotes, supports and advocates for the effective delivery of quality adult and family literacy services in the state of Florida.

As a statewide umbrella literacy organization and the host of Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center, FLC provides a range of services to support more than 300 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers throughout Florida. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs.

Contact:
Florida Literacy Coalition, Inc.
Office (407) 246-7110
E-mail: dorok@floridaliteracy.org
Website: www.floridaliteracy.org

###