

Article Continued:
**Florida Literacy Coalition to Apply Innovative IBM
Technology to Improving Statewide Literacy Efforts**

e-Literacy News
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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.