

## IBM Reading Companion Web-based literacy grant program



*Reading Companion provides a virtual library of books for learners to read aloud and receive immediate audio feedback through interactive software.*

“You sound great!” Music to the ears of anyone learning to read. With IBM’s Reading Companion program, emerging readers immediately hear such statements after reading aloud from a library of virtual books. The audio feedback is the result of a groundbreaking interactive software application developed by IBM Research.

In 2006, IBM is providing grants to 100 schools and nonprofit organizations in the United States, Canada and international locations, offering free access to this revolutionary software application at [www.readingcompanion.org](http://www.readingcompanion.org). More sites will be added in 2007 and beyond.

### **Functionality, worldwide applications**

At the heart of Reading Companion’s effectiveness is its simplicity. Practicing readers are equipped with headset microphones that are connected to their computers. They select an e-book from the virtual library and read the phrases and sentences aloud.

The Reading Companion software “listens” and then provides immediate audio feedback on pronunciation and accuracy. Accurate readers receive positive reinforcement from the “companion tutor.” Those readers having difficulties will hear a gentle reminder to try again or a correct reading of the words.

*“Regardless of how children and adults learn how to read, one thing is clear: practice is the key to success. Reading Companion has the powerful capacity to improve reading skills by giving the learner time for individualized feedback and reinforcement. And it’s available 24/7 via the Web.”*

*Robin Willner  
vice president, Global Community Initiatives  
IBM Corporate Community Relations*



*Reading Companion availability via the Web means ongoing, anytime/anywhere access for children and adults in need of improving literacy skills.*

### **24/7 availability**

Reading Companion's availability on the Web enables students to have access via their home, school or community organization, and users are able to continue their lessons exactly where they left off in previous sessions. In addition, Reading Companion includes evaluation reports for instructors and teachers on the progress of individual students.



*In 2006, IBM will provide 100 Reading Companion grants throughout the world. More sites will be added in 2007 and beyond.*

"Not only is it a great example of 'software that makes a difference,' but it is also 'innovation that makes a difference,'" said Jennifer Lai, IBM Research Manager, Adaptive Learning.

"Since this is the first-ever combination of these technologies -- that is, voice recognition technology over the Web -- we expect there will be other opportunities for using this model of fast and accurate speech recognition on demand and on the Web."

Independent evaluations of the technology demonstrate that children who use the software tested significantly higher on word recognition and comprehension tasks. For adults, the software not only improved reading skills but also helped improve their English pronunciation.

### **Complementing existing literacy curriculum**

"This interactive tool is a tremendous asset to have available in our classroom," said Kitty Bateman, Adult Literacy Coordinator, Queensborough Community College, located in New York City. "We have large numbers of adults in search of literacy competencies. This will work great with this

audience and within the program we already have."

For JFK Magnet School principal Louis Cuglietto, Reading Companion is a great asset for the teachers and students at his school in Port Chester, NY. "Imagine being a second grader, working with voice recognition software that helps you read and pronounce correctly. Reading Companion will complement our literacy curriculum, will be fun for our students, and will be an added resource for our teachers."

For more information about IBM Corporate Community Relations, go to [ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives](http://ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives)



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