

# Bloomberg

## Istation and Boulder Learning Collaborate on Oral Reading and Listening Program

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Program uses advanced speech recognition to assess students

Dallas, TX, Aug. 06, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Istation, a Dallas-based education technology company, is working with Boulder Learning, Inc. to measure how accurately, fluently and expressively students can read grade-level texts aloud.

Known for its computer adaptive assessments and instruction for reading, math and Spanish literacy, Istation is partnering with Boulder Learning to develop Istation's Oral Reading Fluency and Listening Comprehension Program by incorporating advanced speech-recognition technology. Istation will enhance Boulder Learning's existing speech-recognition and assessment product, FLORA, and adapt it for large-scale deployment in classrooms across the nation.

FLORA, which stands for "Fluent Oral Reading Assessment," was created to automatically assess students' oral reading fluency. The ability to accurately and fluently read grade-level texts is considered one of the most efficient and predictive measures of reading proficiency.

"This will take what we have been doing with Istation's state-of-the-art reading assessments and give teachers and students even more information for intervention and subsequent instruction," said Richard H. Collins, chairman and CEO of Istation, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2018. "Our goal is to ensure that every student has a chance to reach their potential."

The new Istation program will use advanced speech-recognition technology to analyze what students say and how fluently they speak.

The idea behind the project is to give teachers another time-saving tool in the classroom, allowing them to focus on student learning rather than assessments. In addition, the program saves recordings of students' oral reading for teachers to review as needed so they have the best data possible to better guide students.

Istation will launch a pilot program with manual scoring during the 2018-2019 school year that will record students' reading and allow teachers to manually score and log the results. This pilot will be deployed in select areas of the United States, covering all major dialect regions of the country.

Boulder Learning will analyze the data from the pilot to program the assessment and automate scoring. Once fully developed, the product will give teachers the option to manually score oral fluency or use the scores provided by the program. The new oral fluency assessment will become a computer-delivered subset of the ISIP™ (Istation's Indicators of Progress) assessment program for students in kindergarten through third grade.

ISIP effectively measures skills that are predictive of future academic success. Studies conducted by the University of Central Florida and by Southern Methodist University show that Istation can predict student outcomes on critical end-of-instruction tests, giving teachers insight for intervention opportunities with low-scoring students.

"The new Istation oral reading fluency and listening comprehension program will enhance existing data, showing what intervention may be needed," Collins said. "In the end, teachers and students will have an even clearer road map to improving academic performance, making it possible for students to become superheroes in the classroom and in life beyond their formal education."

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About Istation

Founded in 1998 and celebrating its 20th anniversary, Istation (Imagination Station) is based in Dallas, Texas. It has become one of the nation's leading providers of richly animated, game-like educational technology that provides computer adaptive intervention and instruction for reading, math, and English and Spanish literacy. Winner of several national educational technology awards, the Istation program puts more instructional time in the classroom through small-group and collaborative instruction. Istation's innovative reading, math and Spanish programs immerse students in an engaging and interactive environment and inspire them to learn. Additionally, administrators and educators can use Istation to easily track the progress of their students, schools and classrooms. Istation now serves over 4 million students throughout the United States and in several other countries.

About Boulder Learning, Inc.

Boulder Learning is a pioneer and world leader in children's automatic speech recognition with almost two decades of experience in the field. Boulder Learning is a privately held software company focused on improving children's learning outcomes through embedded machine learning technologies, including speech recognition, natural processing and conversations with lifelike virtual tutors. Boulder Learning was founded in 2007 and pioneered neural network approaches for embedded speech recognition in reading assessment. Boulder Learning is proud to collaborate with Istation to embed its speech recognition technologies into a fast, accurate and fully automatic assessment of children's reading comprehension abilities.