

The Edmond Sun

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Special to the Sun Aug 8, 2018



DALLAS — Istation, an 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 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 subtest 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."