



**PBS KIDS RAISING READERS INITIATIVE LAUNCHES
“PBS KIDS ISLAND” TO IMPROVE CHILDREN’S READING SKILLS**

New Web site at www.readytolearnreading.org features games, activities, resources and tools for kids, parents and teachers

ARLINGTON, VA, October 15, 2008 – PBS and The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) announce the launch of PBS KIDS Island, the centerpiece of the new PBS KIDS Raising Readers Web site (www.readytolearnreading.org), which provides free reading games and activities for children, parents, caregivers and teachers to use at home or in the classroom. Developed through a cooperative agreement of the U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Ready To Learn Partnership, and funded by a Ready To Learn grant, the initiative extends PBS KIDS® efforts to provide engaging and educational content on-air and on-line, paving the way for cross-platform learning as Internet access increases in homes, schools and libraries.

“Millions of children across the U.S. are entering elementary school without basic reading skills,” said Robert Lippincott, senior vice president of PBS Education. “With PBS’s experience in producing educational content, we have a real opportunity to help a new generation of children learn to read, leveraging a media mix that includes the Web. PBS KIDS Island engages young children, guiding them on the critical path to literacy and offers valuable, free tools for caregivers and teachers to foster reading skills.”

PBS KIDS Island gives children the tools to build an online island carnival by playing reading games with PBS KIDS characters. Providing a familiar and comfortable environment for emerging readers, the research-based program guides children through seven different literacy-building levels, including rhyming, letter identification, alliteration, phonics, letter sequencing, phonemic awareness and reading/vocabulary. PBS KIDS Island is currently serving the needs of children ages two-to-five, with plans to offer content for children ages six-to-eight in 2009.

“When children are engaged, they learn,” said Lesli Rotenberg, senior vice president, Children’s Media, PBS. “PBS KIDS Island takes children on new adventures to explore literacy development with trusted PBS KIDS characters, and provides teachers, caregivers and parents a measure of their child’s progress on core literacy skills.”

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PBS KIDS Island Highlights:

- Educational reading games from award-winning PBS KIDS Raising Readers programs, SESAME STREET, BETWEEN THE LIONS, SUPER WHY and WORDWORLD;
- A steady progression of skill sets as emerging readers play through seven core reading skill levels, from phonological awareness to letter sequencing and vocabulary;
- A progress tracker assists parents as they cultivate their child's learning, and enables teachers to chart progress for an entire classroom with detailed reports on each child's needs and successes;
- Printable lesson plans and recommended daily reading activities to continue learning off-line;
- "Word of the Day" activities to build vocabulary; and
- Educational videos.

PBS worked closely with leading early childhood experts to develop PBS KIDS Island and the new PBS KIDS Raising Readers site. Activities are based on cutting-edge research on how children learn to read and the role of electronic media, and what works in classroom and in home settings.

"We are excited to fund PBS KIDS Island and *readytolearnreading.org*," said Dr. Jayne James, executive director of the Ready To Learn grant for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

"Through this grant, we are focused on designing, researching and building tools, like PBS KIDS Raising Readers, to show how media can in fact help children learn to read."

Technical Requirements

PBS KIDS Island and the new PBS KIDS Raising Readers site are available at www.readytolearnreading.org. Users will need a modern browser; Internet Explorer 7 and Firefox versions 2 and 3 are recommended. Javascript must be enabled on this browser, which must also have the most recent version of flash installed, version 9.0.124. Determining the currently installed version of flash is documented here:

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/about/>.

Some may find it necessary to remove their current version of flash to properly install this newer version, the instructions to do so are available here and this is a free program:

http://kb.adobe.com/selfservice/viewContent.do?externalId=tn_14157.

About PBS KIDS Raising Readers and the Ready To Learn Grant

PBS KIDS Raising Readers utilizes reading-focused PBS KIDS multi-media content, including television programming, Web content and games for parents and teachers, professional development for caregivers and teachers, and curriculum for preschool and Kindergarten settings. This national initiative incorporates research-based methodologies focused on how children learn from media and employs a 360-degree approach, surrounding children and families with learning opportunities where they live and are most likely to interact.

PBS KIDS Raising Readers is funded by the US Department of Education's Ready To Learn grant and is a cooperative agreement of the U. S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS and The Ready To Learn Partnership to help children ages 2-8 build reading skills. The program serves a broad spectrum of children, but is most focused on low-income families.

About CPB

CPB, a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1100 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television, and related on-line services.



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