

# From Stigma to Success – Enabling All Students to Participate in the Curriculum



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Teachers' time and students' embarrassment typify the process of reading to and scribing for students who are reading and writing below grade level. A poor reader confronted with the prospect of mastering curriculum written at or above grade level has little hope of success. He or she must ask the teacher or another student for help, and then wait for that assistance to be delivered. Written assignments pose the same predicament; either the student must have someone scribe the answers or fail the assignment.

Based on Kentucky's universal design for learning in which technology is used to enable students with diverse learning needs to be successful in the classroom, Palm Beach County is following a similar model. The Department of Exceptional Student Education purchased *Read and Write Gold 7.1E*, developed by TextHelp Systems, for all Palm Beach County public and charter schools. Kentucky is now in its fourth year of implementing the

software. Data emerging from this statewide initiative is impressive; students' reading and writing levels have improved on statewide and classroom assessments. Teachers report increased attention to task, greater classroom participation, and a reduction in inappropriate behavior.

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*Read and Write Gold 7.1E* is a toolbar interacting within programs students typically use: Internet Explorer, Microsoft Word, and Adobe. Text written in these applications is read back to the student via powerful speech engines. As the chunk of text to be read is highlighted in one color, each individual word that is being read is highlighted in another color. The association between the spoken word and the written word is imprinted on the students' consciousness. *Read and Write Gold*

bridges the gap between the spoken and printed word.

The program is in the process of being disseminated throughout Palm Beach County. Principals designated a lead teacher to receive intensive training and then train professionals at their respective school sites. Once a month FDLRS provides a full day workshop for professionals seeking additional training. TextHelp Systems offers a monthly webinar for problem-solving technical issues. In January, FDLRS will offer a monthly forum in which teachers can discuss the program's impact on student performance.

Palm Beach County is the first district in Florida to implement a large scale solution to accessibility. A quote from Skip Stahl of CAST, Center for Applied Special Technology states, "If you can't open the door, there's no reason to want what's inside." In Palm Beach County, we have provided the key to that door: supporting all learners according to their individual strengths and needs through technology.



## *Read & Write Gold* for Home Purchase

### **Ordering information:**

Parent TextHelp contact: Mike Wood at 888-248-4944

The cost is \$150 to purchase the program for home use.

Interested in a parent workshop on using the program?

Contact Brenda Tanfield at 561-434-8975.