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**LITERACY, INC.: BUILDING LITERACY RICH COMMUNITIES  
TO SUPPORT YOUNG READERS**

**NEW YORK, NY --** A pressing problem facing society today is children who cannot read. It is crucial that children learn to read proficiently by the end of the third grade, since data show that children who do not read well by then have a poor chance of ever catching up. What's worse, these children represent the single largest identifiable group that will either be incarcerated or receive public assistance in later years. In New York City schools alone, four in ten children are reading-challenged and at risk of never learning to read at all.

LITERACY, INC. (LINC) was founded in 1996 by former New York State Regent Mimi Levin Lieber in response to the low reading levels of children living in low-income communities throughout New York City. LINC is a not-for-profit organization that works with community members and organizations to provide thousands of hours of out-of-classroom reading each week, both in schools and in other community places. LINC's mission is to develop a proven system of outreach and coordination that can help build language-rich neighborhoods where all young children feel supported as readers. According to Ms. Lieber, "Every child, with enough support, has the capacity to learn to read, and every community and neighborhood has the resources to make this happen if they are organized around that goal."

To facilitate early literacy activities, LINC hires coordinators to guide the formation of Community Literacy Networks comprised of parents, school personnel and local businesses, organizations and institutions. "The role of the LINC coordinator is to foster community action

and engage community members to identify opportunities for providing more reading activities for young children,” says Vera Weintraub, LINC Executive Director. “LINC provides the model that develops sustainable community programs to ensure that young children learn to read.” The literacy activities are built from inside the communities and are carried out by neighbors. To date, LINC has worked with over 75 schools primarily in four New York City Instructional Divisions to initiate reading partner programs. LINC has more than 350 active partners, including schools, local coalitions, and community based organizations. Last year, LINC provided over 3,400 children with weekly one-on-one or small group out-of-classroom reading time. “In the past year, LINC has reached over 10,000 children and family members through literacy program activities,” adds Ms. Lieber.

Among the ways LINC’s Community Literacy Networks build language and literacy-rich communities is by bringing together people who represent such diverse organizations as local restaurants and laundromats, or churches and senior centers, to create reading environments for children and their family members. In addition, students from local colleges and many adults are recruited to read with children in their elementary school classrooms and at after school programs. Also, teenagers from middle and high schools volunteer to tutor young children in reading. Saturday Literacy Fairs are held in LINC coordinated communities, and animal days, such as BEAR (Be Excited About Reading) and TIGER (Together In Getting Everyone Reading) have been promoted by community-based institutions and businesses.

LINC’s proven system of outreach and coordination of literacy programs within the NYC schools was recognized by the National Network of Partnership Schools as a Partnership Organization Award winner for the 2001-2002 school year. “Every child’s ability to read is

significantly influenced by language development from birth, encouragement and repeated pleasurable reading experiences,” concludes Ms. Lieber.

“LINC’s overall purpose is to provide a model for building literacy rich neighborhoods so that children can become successful students and productive citizens by learning to read,” adds Ms. Weintraub. “It’s all about providing a future for all children.” For more information regarding Literacy, Inc. call 212-620-5462 or log on to the LINC Web site at [www.lincnyc.org](http://www.lincnyc.org).

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