

# Community Literacy Network Champion Awards

---

*Literacy, Inc.  
New York, New York*

Creating more reading opportunities for young children is the goal of the Community Literacy Champion Awards. During the program's successful first two years, award winners have included:

- A librarian at a school in Queens who started a Book Buddies program through which older children read to younger students during lunch periods
- A community organization that wanted to expand its weekly Family Reading Hour at a local fast-food restaurant
- A family health center in Brooklyn that recruited adult English language learners to read to children while they were waiting to see a doctor

In all, Literacy, Inc. (LINC) presented a dozen such awards in 2005–2006. The awards include grants of \$150 to \$300, plus ongoing technical assistance and support for the reading programs, including site visits.

“LINC believes that the people who live and work in a community are most able to speak to the needs of that community,” said one LINC program associate. “We added this practice to encourage more direct community collaboration and support of literacy programs.”

The awards program has three goals:

- To encourage collaboration locally to benefit children
- To create more out-of-classroom reading time
- To provide opportunities for residents to assume leadership positions and invest in the vitality of their neighborhoods

Any individual or organization connected to LINC's Community Literacy Networks could apply for the awards. This includes schools, parents, community organizations, and school districts.

The idea for the awards grew out of conversations with organization leaders, Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) members, school staffs, families, students, and community and business partners. Many of them wanted to start a community-based reading program, but they did not know how to do so. Through these awards, LINC offers community members “support to make their own ideas a reality.” LINC coordinators stress the importance of using the grant money for programming rather than incentives so that the reading efforts can continue after the grant money is spent.

The awards program costs about \$2,000, some of it provided by corporate donations and the rest from foundation support. The award-winning reading initiatives help children become successful students and life-long learners.

The organization estimates it reaches about 1,200 students, 50 parents, and more than 50 community members through its annual awards. LINC, which has 21 literacy networks in New York City and one in upstate New York, also is a partner to 600 schools to promote early reading.

*Marrakech Arbuckle, Program Associate  
(212) 620-5462  
marbuckle@lincnyc.org*