



## Bethune Learning Centers

Bethune Learning Centers (BLCs) boost the reading skills of inner city children and adults. By providing learners with opportunities to develop their skills using software in community settings and at home, working in teams with each other and with their parents, BLCs ensure that every child becomes a strong reader. Once they are reading, children perform better in math, pursue their interests in and outside of school, and go on to live more satisfying lives.

Children love the software that they use in the virtual Centers. They work together on games that help build essential phonics skills and develop each child's reading vocabulary – whether they are starting out in reading, or just need a little help. Included eBooks provide a venue for children to listen to books read out loud, an opportunity to read to friends and parents, and finally an opportunity to read alone; encouraging them to read for pleasure. Comprehension activities ensure that learners are capturing the meaning of what they read. Most important, each child progresses at their own pace following their own interests. Learners can choose any activity or eBook at any time. They are in charge of their own learning, building self-confidence as they go.

Bethune Learning Centers can be operated by any organization with no requirement for trained teachers or computer hardware. As long as an adult (or responsible teen) is available to hand out the optional tablets supplied in the BLC kit, turn them on, and launch the BLC app, children can use and benefit from them. Everything needed is on the tablets (or on software supplied for existing computers) and at the end of a session, all the coordinator needs to do is collect them and plug them in for the night.

One unusual feature of the program is that we keep no records of student use or status. We take this approach on purpose. There is no database to hack, no records to protect and no legal requirement for the host organization to protect sensitive information about young people. Learners are truly in charge of their own learning – the approach recommended by the research and proven to be most effective in programs across the country.

Most parents will first experience the software with their children. We are also seeking moderate funding for the development of a version of our software for use by older children and adults. Up to about age 9, most learners are comfortable with traditional game interfaces. After that, we will provide simple non-distracting backgrounds and more mature readings that allow older learners to master basic skills without juvenile graphics and stories.

Bethune Learning Centers turn any community center, church, juvenile program or after school program into a community reading center. Parents already know where to go, and children are already familiar with the location. All you need to do is to order the BLC kit and follow the instructions – the software does the rest. BLCs are the solution for better reading, better school outcomes and better communities in our cities.

*Bethune Learning Centers is a non-profit formed by former members of the Harlem Globetrotters working with Flink Learning to provide a cost-effective literacy solution in inner city settings. Installations are generously supported by private donations, by education grants, and by government funding.*