

8000 Marina Blvd., Ste. 400  
Brisbane, CA 94005  
WEB: [www.classroom.com](http://www.classroom.com)  
PHONE: (650) 351-5100  
FAX: (650) 351-5250

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## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### MISSISSIPPI DOE ENTERS INTO \$1.2 MILLION AGREEMENT WITH CLASSROOM CONNECT FOR READING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**BRISBANE, CA – January 6, 2005** – Classroom Connect, an educational technology division of Harcourt Inc., announced today an agreement with the Mississippi Department of Education to create a comprehensive online professional development program for K-3 *Reading First* early literacy instruction. The company will create a series of online courses entitled “MS First” for Mississippi’s 535 elementary schools to present participants with knowledge of reading instructional theory and the utilization of instructional strategies based upon scientifically-based reading research.

“With our teachers spread over hundreds of miles and the expense of substitute teachers, travel, facilities, and extra contract training staff, our traditional face-to-face training programs were cost-prohibitive,” said Robin Miles, the Bureau Director of Reading & Early Childhood for the Mississippi Department of Education. “Classroom Connect’s affordable online professional development platform and content allows us to provide high-quality, consistent professional development to all of our teachers.”

Classroom Connect will create and host over 75 hours of online, video-based reading professional development for Mississippi’s educators as well as 40 days of face-to-face workshops to prepare participants to meet the state’s early literacy standards. Much of the *MS First* online content will be custom-made to the state’s specific criteria and will feature video examples of exemplary teaching practices from Mississippi’s master teachers.

“States and districts face enormous challenges meeting the professional development requirements of the *Reading First* initiative,” said Jim Bowler, President and CEO of Classroom Connect. “Mississippi is to be credited with taking this challenge seriously and developing a combination of online and traditional in-person workshops that will best equip the state’s reading coaches to improve reading instruction throughout the state. Classroom Connect is proud to be a partner in this innovative program.”

#### **About Classroom Connect**

Classroom Connect is an award-winning provider of professional development programs and online instructional materials for K-12 education and is focused on two core areas: Technology Integration and Customized Professional Development. The Mississippi “MS First” project uses Classroom Connect’s Customized Professional Development solution that also includes face-to-face workshops and made-to-order conferences for K-12 educators. For more information, contact Classroom Connect by calling (800) 638-1639 or visit [www.classroom.com](http://www.classroom.com).

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Headquartered in Brisbane, CA, Classroom Connect is part of Harcourt Education, a global education provider serving students and teachers in PreK through grade 12, adult learners, and readers of all ages. Harcourt Education is part of Reed Elsevier Group plc ([www.reedelsevier.com](http://www.reedelsevier.com)), a world-leading publisher and information provider.

For more information contact:  
David Slater  
Classroom Connect  
(650) 351-5153

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