

Napa County preschoolers offered free reading app

PROGRAM INCREASES READINESS FOR KINDERGARTEN

15 hours ago • [ISABELLE DILLS](#)

Preschool-aged children in Napa County will soon have free access to an early learning vocabulary and reading program, thanks to a partnership between the Napa County Office of Education and NapaLearns.

The program, “Footsteps2Brilliance,” offers 18 illustrated and animated e-books in English and Spanish, along with more than 200 educational games. There is also a nonfiction series featuring 26 alphabet books and related games.

“In the U.S., 46 percent of children enter kindergarten at risk of failure because they lack essential literacy skills,” said Barbara Nemko, county superintendent of schools.

Footsteps2Brilliance, Nemko said, teaches young learners the basic vocabulary and reading skills that are critical to early academic success.

“This can be a particularly effective tool for our young English learners,” Nemko said.

The program will be available to all preschool aged children in Napa County — including all children who attend public and private preschools, as well as children who do not attend preschool.

Footsteps2Brilliance early learning apps can be downloaded to any computer, tablet or mobile device.

As a web-based program, children will be able to access the program both in their preschool programs and at home with their families.

During a pilot study in the fall of 2012, 88 percent of students who used the Footsteps2Brilliance curriculum were at grade level by the end of kindergarten, compared to 59 percent of students at the beginning of the year, Nemko said.

Footsteps2Brilliance is typically available for a fee to parents and school districts. This countywide license provides at no charge equal access to all preschool age children in Napa County. This is the first countywide offering of this award-winning program in the United States.

Peg Maddocks, executive director of NapaLearns, said her organization has been looking for a way to provide all pre-K children and their families with digital apps to help prepare them for kindergarten. NapaLearns is a nonprofit that works with educators in incorporating technology in the classroom

“Since 80 percent of parents own mobile devices, this program is an innovative way to reach parents through devices they already own and to connect school and home,” Maddocks said. “The Board of NapaLearns believes providing Footsteps2Brilliance to all Napa County families with preschool age children is a valuable investment, and will help meet our goal of closing the achievement gap in our local schools.”

Footsteps2Brilliance

For Teachers: All Napa County preschool teachers are invited to attend one of two trainings. The first training will be Monday, 4 to 7 p.m. The second training will be March 31, 9 a.m. to noon. There is no cost to attend these sessions. Visit napacoe.org/footsteps-2-brilliance to register.

For parents: The Napa County Office of Education will be reaching out this spring to the parents of preschool-aged children countywide to offer support and training in using Footsteps2Brilliance. Parents interested in more information may sign up at <http://goo.gl/eo8At0>.

Footsteps2Brilliance has been recognized with numerous awards, including being named a Gold Winner by the National Parenting Publications Awards, and a 2012 First Prize Winner for Best English Spanish Learner/English Language Learner Edition by the American Education Publishers.

“Napa’s countywide early learning initiative is a transformative model for early learning in the United States,” said Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance. “By using smartphones and tablets that parents already own, Napa County is able to provide all parents with the tools they need to prepare their children for success in school and in life.”
