



[Home](#) > [Countries](#) > [North America](#) > [United States of America](#) > Digital Footsteps to Early Literacy

Home

Countries

Target Groups

Research

Topics

Conference 2013

Events

About us

Digital Footsteps to Early Literacy



The topic of [Early Literacy](#) seems to become more and more important amongst literacy advocates. However, knowledge about the role of early language exposure to academic success is not a new one.

Now considered a landmark study, Betty Hart and Todd Risley published the results of longitudinal research with the title *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* in 1995. The researchers could demonstrate a high correlation between vocabulary size at age three and language test scores at ages nine and ten in linguistic areas such as vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening and syntax.

The problem: the researchers discovered a huge word gap between welfare families and professional families by age three. The data showed that children of welfare families heard on average 616 words per hour, whereas children from professional families with mostly college-educated parents heard 2153 words per hour. This word gap led subsequently to poorer educated linguistic and overall school performance at age nine. The researchers concluded that the most important aspect of children's language experience is its amount of exposure.

Knowing about such issues, [Ilene Rosenthal described in an interview with edtech digest](#) how she observed her nephew playing a video clip from the iPhone. She developed and researched an idea involving mobile technology in order to give children a very early exposure to language independent from time, place and caregivers. Rosenthal founded the educational company [Footsteps2Brilliance](#), which has come up with an early learning device agnostic mobile platform accessible via desktop or mobile devices. The platform contains libraries of interactive books and more than 300 games designed to increase language exposure of pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade children.

One of the libraries, for example, entitled the *Academic Language Program for Students*, provides young learners with the 1000 essential words needed to become proficient readers and writers. These stories are written and developed by teachers, children's authors, and reviewed by cognitive researchers. A unique toggle switch allows each page to be read in English or Spanish. Watch this video to get an impression:



The contents are available either directly through a membership or are distributed via schools and school districts that have acquired a license for their teachers, parents and students. Interestingly, Footsteps2Brilliance helps teachers with incorporating the digital contents into the classroom. Teachers are also able to track each student's progress.

The Academic Language Program for Students was piloted in California. Children who had never before been to school and spoke very little English used the *Academic Language Program for Students* to learn to read. After four weeks, the children were exposed to over 180,000 words and over 600 books and had their

reading comprehension rise by 17 percent. Footsteps2Brilliance is currently being used by over 37,000 children in the United States. Data is showing that the children who are using Footsteps2Brilliance are experiencing significant gains in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking skills. They also are having fun learning.

Future plans for Footsteps2Brilliance is to expand the current work with the most innovative superintendents in the United States in order to prepare all children for 3rd grade reading proficiency. This is being done by helping the superintendents create *Model Innovation Cities*. A *Model Innovation City* is a turn-key, citywide literacy solution that utilizes the Footsteps2Brilliance Mobile Technology Platform to cost-effectively scale pre-K through 3rd grade literacy apps to every family within a school district's jurisdiction. This levels the playing field for all children. [Watch this video to learn more.](#)

Footsteps2Brilliance also has created a consumer version of its award winning content entitled [Early Learning University](#), which allows parents to purchase individual learning system apps for their children.

2014-03-03

© Reading worldwide 2012