

How little kids in Pomona got their hands on high tech

By Monica Rodriguez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

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POMONA >> Small children got their hands on some high tech Wednesday.

Educators from around Southern California along with Pomona Unified parents and others gathered at Lincoln Elementary School Wednesday to celebrate the launch of a project that will help prepare local tykes to excel academically before they ever reach school.

Pomona Unified is one of 12 school districts statewide to access the [Footsteps2Brilliance Early Learning Literacy App](#) for free.

The app contains more than 1,000 children's books, nursery rhymes, songs, educational games and other resources parents

can use with their children from birth to second grade to develop literacy skills.

The materials in the app are particularly useful in helping low-income children develop vocabulary and other literacy skills.

Research has shown children from low-income families may speak 30 million fewer words by age 3 compared with their peers from affluent families. The result is reading may be delayed and academics stalled, studies show.

By ensuring children are prepared for school, "we will use third grade not to determine how many beds are needed in prison but how many seats are needed in college," Pomona Superintendent Richard Martinez said to the hundreds gathered in the Lincoln Elementary auditorium.

Pomona Unified leaders see the app as a resource that will allow parents and children to spend time together learning and give children a solid foundation that will translate into educational and life success.

Martinez said after the launch he expects to see positive results associated with the app in as little as three to five years.

After using the app — which can be used in English and Spanish — as part of a smaller pilot project, Spanish-speaking parents have reported they are developing their English skills at the same time their children are developing reading and writing skills.

The school district has been inviting local businesses to help by allowing families to use their Wi-Fi to download the app on their smartphones, said Michael Dyer, a Pomona Unified teacher specialist in the area of educational technology.

Some families may not have an Internet connection at home, but in most communities about 80 percent of parents — regardless of their socioeconomic status — have a smartphone, said Eugene Narciso chief operating officers and founder of Footsteps2Brilliance, Inc.

To access the free app parents can go to www.myf2b.com/register/pomona.

During Wednesday's launch event, Stephanie Baker, Pomona Unified's deputy superintendent of instructional services, said the district's goal is have its children read 500 million words by September. To make it more interesting, the district challenged Palmdale School District Superintendent Raul Maldonado to see who reaches the 500 million word goal first.

Maldonado — whose district is also using Footsteps2Brilliance, rolling out the program in March — accepted.

However, Palmdale's children have already read 165 million words, he said.

That's not a problem, Baker said.

"We're going to be the first to reach 500 million," she said.

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