



## Footsteps2Brilliance Alignment to Family Engagement Plan In Texas House Bill 4 High Quality PreKindergarten Grant

**Grant Application Due April 8, 2014**

Footsteps2Brilliance is uniquely positioned to help districts engage their families and communities in preparing all children to be ready for kindergarten. Using the mobile devices—smartphones, tablets, and computers—that parents and schools already own, the Footsteps2Brilliance Enterprise App, School Edition, enables districts to cost-effectively scale bilingual, research-proven early learning curriculum to all pre-K children within the district. In addition, the Footsteps2Brilliance Model Innovation City program guides districts through a system to engage their teachers, student, and parents, as well as the larger community.

Many Texas districts have partnered with Footsteps2Brilliance to create an innovative preschool family and community engagement system. The following document outlines how Footsteps2Brilliance can become the cornerstone of a High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Family Engagement Plan.

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**Grant Requirement 4:**

**Develop and implement a family engagement plan in accordance with TAC §102.1003(f) to assist the district or school in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education. The family engagement plan must:**

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**a. Facilitate family-to-family support**

Footsteps2Brilliance provides parents with the tools and services they need to support their children's vocabulary, literacy, and cognitive development even before they enter kindergarten. Because Footsteps2Brilliance can be accessed from any smart phone (Apple or Android), tablet, or traditional computer, school districts are able to leverage parental ownership of mobile technology to extend the classroom into kitchens, living rooms, waiting rooms, and bus rides. The Footsteps2Brilliance curriculum provides parents with over 1,000 audio-encoded, interactive eBooks, songs and educational games **in English and Spanish**. This empowers even those parents with limited literacy skills to easily extend classroom learning into every day life.

Footsteps2Brilliance makes developing literacy skills in young children motivating and engaging. By using a unique game methodology, children practice literacy skills and develop mastery while having fun. In addition, the Footsteps2Brilliance games serve as real-time formative assessments that help parents and teachers track student progress.



Most importantly, the Footsteps2Brilliance program has been proven to work. An Independent randomized control research study from Stanford University concluded that families using the Footsteps2Brilliance program significantly increased kindergarten readiness and significantly increased the number of books and amount of time parents and children read together.

Footsteps2Brilliance provides a unique methodology for allowing all families within a district to self-enroll in the program. This allows school districts to create public awareness campaigns through billboards, banners, posters, and PSAs inviting families to enroll in Footsteps2Brilliance and helping the families understand how to use the program. Given the ease of distribution, Footsteps2Brilliance spreads virally throughout the community by word of mouth. Often, classroom use of the program increases as a result of family and student enthusiasm for the program—instead of the other way around. Footsteps2Brilliance's professional development team guides teachers to learning communities where families regularly come together to learn and share based on their shared experiences on the Footsteps2Brilliance program.

#### **b. Network of community resources**

Footsteps2Brilliance is already at work in numerous communities across the nation as a scalable and comprehensive resource that unifies community-based organizations with the shared goal of ensuring every child is ready for kindergarten. The Footsteps2Brilliance Model Innovation City program provides a blueprint and hands-on guidance for districts to partner with business, education, and service organizations within their community to create a Literacy Collaborative that is dedicated to ensuring every child in the community has equity access to the high-quality resources needed to be ready for kindergarten and to read proficiently by third grade. The Footsteps2Brilliance Model Innovation City program outlines a collective impact plan where each stakeholder commits to a specific role that will enable families to enroll, download, and use Footsteps2Brilliance on their mobile devices.

Districts are encouraged to use the real-time Footsteps2Brilliance data to measure program impact and to motivate the community toward reaching challenging goals. For example, Footsteps2Brilliance provides a “words-read” widget to post on community websites so that the entire community can monitor success toward the goal of a million or more words read each year. The Footsteps2Brilliance Model Innovation City program brings together district service providers, mayors and policy makers, pediatricians, library systems, key business leaders, social services, faith-based community leaders, parent-teacher advocates, colleges and universities, foundations, and more, with a clear vision and actionable goals to give every child the opportunity to start on a lifetime of learning.

#### **c. Increase family participation in decision-making**



Footsteps2Brilliance is founded on the principle that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Our design embraces the uniqueness of each child and each family. Instead of lock-stepping children through a forced sequence of learning, Footsteps2Brilliance enables families to explore and discover together. With the touch of a button, families can move seamlessly between learning in English and learning in Spanish. Teachers and schools can easily track student activity on Footsteps2Brilliance in order to understand interests and areas of strength and weakness. By creating a bridge between the learning at school and the learning that occurs informally in the kitchen, the grocery store, the park, the car, or the waiting room, Footsteps2Brilliance strengthens the family and school partnership.

**d. Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning**

The landmark research of Hart and Risley demonstrated that at-risk children hear 30 million fewer words by age 4 than their more affluent peers. These children enter kindergarten with 25% of the vocabulary they need to succeed, and 88% of them never catch up. However, 61% of our at-risk children have no books in their homes. Also, research points out the importance of parental involvement in a child's education.

Footsteps2Brilliance is uniquely positioned to give every family access to high-quality learning experiences anywhere, anytime. The Footsteps2Brilliance program can be used on any mobile device—smartphone, tablet, or computer—with or without an internet connection. According to recent research from the Pew Foundation, more than 80% of families own a smartphone, regardless of socio-economic status. Footsteps2Brilliance offers a flexible deployment that can quickly put thousands of books, games, and activities into every parent's pocket. The curriculum exposes children to the key academic vocabulary they need as a foundation for reading and writing. The curriculum provides children with a cost-effective library of beautifully written and illustrated e-books and educational games that address comprehension, vocabulary, writing and critical thinking skills

**e. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for educators on culturally responsive, evidence-based strategies that support the education of the child; and**

The Footsteps2Brilliance curriculum and professional development is aligned to Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

Footsteps2Brilliance was not created for a specific demographic. It was created for and is being used by ALL types of families, from low education backgrounds to highly educated households. We recognize that every person brings assets that can positively impact the young children in their family. Footsteps2Brilliance offers highly effective professional development that is based on current research in adult learning as well as the work of the National Staff Development Council. Every session presents clearly defined learning targets, goals, and measurable outcomes for staff and for students. Each professional learning experience also includes the critical elements identified by Joyce and Showers (2002):



- Presentation of theory and research
- Modeling of best practices
- Practice with feedback
- Follow-up and coaching

**f. Evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for continuous improvement.**

The Footsteps2Brilliance program provides real-time insight into family engagement. More than simply tracking time on the program, the Footsteps2Brilliance reporting system enables educators to evaluate peak days and times families are accessing the program, what they are using, and progress toward mastery of concepts. The Footsteps2Brilliance team provides ongoing guidance and support for using this information to implement ongoing improvement.