

## County office of education to launch Footsteps2Brilliance

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The literacy app will be free for families and will be available for use without an Internet connection



*Footsteps2Brilliance in action in a transitional kindergarten classroom at Briarwood Elementary School in Santa Clara. Photo courtesy of Footsteps2Brilliance.*

The San Benito County Office of Education (SBCOE) announced that it is introducing the [Footsteps2Brilliance](#) literacy program across the county. The program will allow families of children through third grade to access an array of interactive, fun and engaging e-books, games, and activities with the goal that all students will be able to read at grade level by the third grade.

Through an app, which will put free software onto a variety of devices, families and schools are able to track a child's progress. The users don't need the Internet after the free app has already been downloaded. It will be available in both English and Spanish and downloads will be available anywhere in the county, including Aromas and San Juan Bautista.

While [pediatricians caution](#) parents of young children up to 3 years old to limit the time spent on an electronic device, Superintendent Krystal Lomanto suggests parents use other methods and strategies in coordination with the program.

"Footsteps2Brilliance should not be the only literacy program used by parents at home," said Lomanto. "Over 90 percent of families have access to a smart phone and some families may not have access to books at home. If we can help a parent understand the importance of early literacy and train them on how to properly use Footsteps2Brilliance when nothing has been used previously, then the child will increase their vocabulary, listen and see text, the program reads out loud if the parent chooses in English or Spanish, and sings nursery rhymes, etc."

While the program is still in its initial stages, there are plans to form a task force related to the program. Lomanto told BenitoLink that she hopes to get community leaders, educational leaders, business owners, parents and anyone who is interested in implementing Footsteps2Brilliance in the county involved.

"As we are in the initial stages of the rollout of the program, more information will be sent out to the public in January to gather our task force," the superintendent said. "The role of the literacy task force is to determine how to best engage the community in literacy, gather partners in assisting the roll out, and review data to determine the needs of our community"

The targeting of young learners is a key component to the program.

"There is a lot of research available about the importance of reading, singing, talking at an early age. The SBCOE would like to target that group while our districts work with the transition kinder through third grade," said Lomanto.

She added that a literacy task force will continue to work to determine the best course to meet the needs of all kids across the county.

During the initial rollout of the program the office of education will begin to train all-day care providers, teachers of districts, pre-school instructors, and after school program instructors on how to implement the program. Once children start to use it, the office of education will host parent trainings (babysitting and food will be provided) in both English and Spanish across the county.

The SBCOE will also have the assistance of the Footsteps2Brilliance team in making sure the rollout will be a success. They have already established programs in [Napa County](#) and [Salinas](#), and elsewhere in the state.

To track students' improvement over the next several years, Lomanto said her office will be implementing a long-term plan that will use both school-measured data from California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress ([CAASPP](#)) and the data that is collected within Footsteps2Brilliance. The office of education will also be looking at benchmark data used by schools and the CAASP English Language Arts 3rd grade scores.

While Lomanto says both parent and teacher trainings will help Footsteps2Brilliance become successful, "It is going to be essential that we come together as a community to put literacy at the forefront."



About:

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Laura Romero is an assistant account executive at Pembroke PR in San Francisco, where she assists with press outreach, event coordination, research and social media planning. Her clients include Interior Designer Will Wick, Brimmoncourt, California Caviar Company and Superga. She graduated from San Jose State University with a degree in public relations. Laura serves as a general assignment reporter for BenitoLink, with beats including schools and San Juan Bautista. She lives in Hollister.

