

Building bridges to literacy

posted on Wed, 04/05/2017 - 11:56am by BenitoLink Staff

San Benito County Office of Education launches free, countywide bilingual early literacy initiative; announces early literacy innovation summit



San Benito County Superintendent of Schools Krystal Lomanto will host Building Bridges 2 Literacy, a bilingual early literacy innovation summit, on Tuesday, May 23, from 10 a.m. to noon at Spring Grove School (500 Spring Grove Road in Hollister). At this event, Lomanto will unveil the county-wide English and Spanish early literacy initiative using smartphones, tablets, and computers. Together with members of the San Benito County Board of Education, Lomanto will challenge the San Benito County community to read 3 million words by Sept. 1, 2017.

This transformative literacy effort supports the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Students. Through this initiative, the San Benito County Office of Education (SBCOE) has partnered with [Footsteps2Brilliance](#), Inc., the creators of an early learning mobile technology platform that enables San Benito County to provide – free of charge – libraries of eBooks, educational games and activities, and creative writing opportunities to every family with 0- to 5-year-olds and Pre-K through third grade students who reside within San Benito County.

Research shows that the greatest disparity of knowledge among children is the vocabulary gap – the number of words a child knows from birth through third grade. Children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words before the age of 4 than their more affluent peers. This problem is compounded by the fact that 61 percent of low-income children have no books in their homes. No single strategy offers a greater return on investment than providing early learners with the tools needed to read proficiently by third grade. Every dollar spent on quality early childhood interventions produces a \$14 to \$17 return.

Footsteps2Brilliance provides a comprehensive curriculum of more than 1,000 English and Spanish books, songs, and games that are fun for children and address the vocabulary gap. Most importantly, these educational resources can be accessed from any smartphone, tablet, or computer with or without an Internet connection. Research shows that more than eighty percent of parents own smartphones or mobile devices. In partnership with Footsteps2Brilliance, SBCOE is giving families, schools, and the community the high-quality educational tools they need to accelerate vocabulary, reading and literacy using the devices they already own.

“When you have a kindergartener who starts school from a low, socioeconomic disadvantaged family, that does not have access to literature or is not read to, there is a 30-million word gap by age 3,” Lomanto said. “When that happens, it takes a long time in that child’s education to make up for that gap, if ever.”

San Benito County has 38.6 percent of its citizens speaking a language other than English at home, with the most common non-English language is Spanish. By becoming a Model Innovation County, SBCOE will serve as a blueprint for districts and counties around the nation to achieve early literacy

success in dual language communities. Through this Model Innovation County Initiative, Lomanto and her team are seeking to leave an mark, impacting the lives of children and families throughout the San Benito County communities for years to come.

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

Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance, said, “We are honored to partner with San Benito County Office of Education to give all children in San Benito County equal access to high-quality bilingual English and Spanish literacy instruction. By using devices that parents already own, such as smartphones and tablets, San Benito is able to provide all parents with the tools they need to prepare their children for success in school and in life. We believe this will be a powerful model for districts and counties across the nation to follow.”

About San Benito County Office of Education:

The San Benito County Office of Education is a public agency operating a variety of programs for children, youth, and families, and supporting schools with academic, business, consulting, and vocational services. The County Office of Education serves as a facilitator in activities between other governmental and support agencies. Contact the office at 831-637-5393. For more information, visit <http://www.sbcoe.org>.

About Footsteps2Brilliance, Inc.

Footsteps2Brilliance, Inc. is an early learning platform designed to accelerate early achievement by uniting the power of mobile gaming technology with the latest in cognitive research. Footsteps2Brilliance provides interactive, 24/7 learning experiences that digitally link school and home to give students the edge they need for success in school today and the world tomorrow.