

App aims to bridge 'word gap'

By Rebecca Morris

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Grayson County Schools District hopes a new program will help some of its youngest students become better readers. During its meeting Dec. 8, the board heard a presentation on the Footsteps2Brilliance program, which uses mobile technology to offer literacy programs to pre-school to third grade-aged children.

Catherine DeRosa, Footsteps2Brilliance's director of curriculum and implementation, said the program can be used on Apple and Android mobile devices as well as traditional computers. It uses game-based graphics and contains more than 1,000 interactive books, songs and games that can be read in both English and Spanish. Parents can use the program to read to their children, and children can use it on their own to boost their cognitive skills.

DeRosa said once the program is in place anyone in Grayson County – including those with children who aren't in school yet – will be able to access it.

Footsteps2Brilliance is designed to combat the "word gap," she said. Studies indicate children who aren't read to when young can develop as much as a 30 million word gap in their vocabularies. And students who aren't proficient readers by third grade generally face academic challenges as they move through school, and are more at risk for dropping out and failing to graduate high school.

The program can be used on- and off-line, generally updating only in spots where WiFi is available. Parents and students can download books, games and songs into personal libraries.

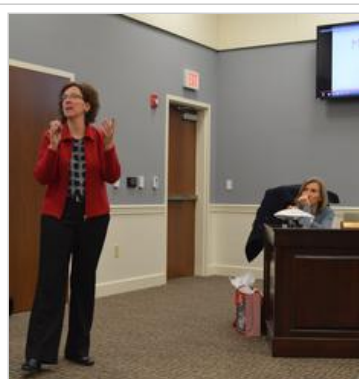
Teacher training on the program is underway.

Also Thursday, the board:

* Remembered former board member and teacher Charlotte Gower, who died Nov. 12, and former teacher and baseball coach Don Lee, who died Oct. 5.

* Approved the high school girls' basketball team playing in a holiday tournament in Somerset and the tennis team heading to Florida during spring break to attend a training camp.

* Approved Caneyville, Clarkson and Wilkey elementary schools applying for \$50,000 "Read to Achieve" grants. The four-year grants are designed to improve students' literacy skills.



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Catherine DeRose director of curriculum and implementation of Footsteps2Brilliance, describes the program to Grayson County School board members. It uses computer and mobile technology to provide games, stories and songs to parents and children to help boost children's reading abilities.