

PVUSD unveils literacy app



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WATSONVILLE — About 80 percent of parents nationwide own some type of mobile device, yet 60 percent of low-income children do not have books in their homes.

These statistics, presented by Footsteps2Brilliance, were the main reason behind the Washington, D.C.-based company's inspiration to create a mobile app of the same name.

On Monday, the Pajaro Valley Unified School District announced the app will be available for students and families within the district for free.

The app, branded locally as "Paso a Paso, Creciendo Juntos," or Step by Step, Growing Together, was created for children as young as 9 months and up through third grade. It provides more than 1,000

eBooks in English and Spanish, educational games and activities, and creative writing opportunities on devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers.

“We are pleased to support our students and future students in becoming successful readers through Paso a Paso,” PVUSD Superintendent Michelle Rodriguez said. “Early access to literacy is key to fostering a love for reading.”

According to research compiled by Footsteps2Brilliance, children from low-income families hear 30 million fewer words before the age of 4 than their middle-class or high-income peers.

PVUSD Board of Trustees President Kimberly De Serpa said studies show that 43 percent of children who don't become proficient in reading will live below the poverty line for the rest of their lives.

“This initiative is not only going to help the children, but also their families,” she said.

During a meeting in May for PVUSD and county education officials about the app, officials said PVUSD would pay \$150,000 per year for the service.

“This early literacy initiative in PVUSD is a transformative model for supporting all children – birth through third grade – toward academic and lifelong success,” said Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance, Inc.

For information, visit www.footsteps2brilliance.com (<http://www.footsteps2brilliance.com>).