

## Early Learning Literacy Innovation Summit Takes Place at Briarwood Elementary School

Story and photos by Cynthia Cheng



Inside Amber Rojas's second grade class on Oct. 19, students were fixated on their Chromebooks. Interactive web activities included Word Wall, involving sounding out letters to spell words, and Whack-A-Word, encouraging the learning of new words. Visitors witnessed firsthand the enthusiasm among the students interacting with the Footsteps2Brilliance Early Learning Literacy App. The Early Learning Literacy Innovation Summit, held at Briarwood Elementary School, introduced the community to the Rising Readers initiative, which would allow Santa Clara families to have access to this literacy app. According to Jennifer Dericco, public information officer for the Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD), the district and city split the cost of \$600,000 to pay for a citywide lifetime license. Parents can go to

[www.myf2b.com/register/SantaClara](http://www.myf2b.com/register/SantaClara) to register themselves and their children for accounts.

"Through the Rising Readers initiative, all Santa Clara families, whether or not they're enrolled in the SCUSD...will have free access to this award winning Footsteps2Brilliance early learning app in English and in Spanish," says City of Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor. "Through an app on your mobile device, your smartphone or your computer, the families can access a comprehensive library curriculum of over 1,000 English and Spanish books, songs, games that are probably really fun for the children and their parents as well. With the platform built both in English and in

Spanish, the app challenges students and adults but in the language they're most comfortable with."

Gillmor explained that early education can provide a critical role in the development of a child when they're most receptive in their first few years of life.

"Children thrive when they're physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally sound and socially competent," Mayor Gillmor says. "Together, these aspects build a foundation for children to become the best that they can be. As our community grows, it's really critical that we provide opportunities and equity for every family in our city."

Gillmor also recognized the City/School District Liason Committee and City Councilmembers Teresa O'Neill, Pat Kolstad, Debi Davis and Dominic Caserta for their support of the initiative.

Superintendent Dr. Stan Rose reasoned that early literacy and language development can improve a child's chance for being a successful citizen later in life.

"In the heart of Silicon Valley in Santa Clara, there is this disparity that's very visible and palpable, where the top one percent live with people who live in stark poverty, and getting books into the hands of all of these students isn't always easy," Rose says. "Particularly gratifying here is that when we talked about developing literacy and making better citizens, our Mayor jumped right on board and said 'that's what we want for our city as well.'"

Also speaking at the event was Albert Gonzalez, SCUSD Board President, Eugene Narciso, COO of Footsteps2Brilliance and Gregory A. Spencer, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Equity Initiatives of Footsteps2Brilliance. The student band Amazing Ponderosa Stars also performed. Certificates of recognition for the Rising Readers initiative came from Congressman Mike Honda, State Senator Bob Wieckowski, U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and State Superintendent of Schools Tom Torlakson.