

Investment in early learning

Peg Maddocks Sep 24, 2017 Updated Sep 25, 2017

Congratulations to the Napa Valley Vintners and their partners in the Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative ("Napa Valley Vintners seek support for progressive Napa Valley Early Learning Initiative," Sept. 17).

Providing 'wrap-around support' for young children and their families is a powerful solution to closing the "30 million word gap" that separates low-income children from their counterparts as they enter kindergarten.

Research shows that children living in poverty, whose parents often have less education, are not exposed to rich vocabulary on a daily basis and hear 30 million fewer words by the time they are 5. Many of these students come to school two or more years behind their more fortunate classmates.



In the Early Learning Initiative, children sponsored by the NVV are fortunate to attend high-quality preschools operated by the Napa County Office of Education at Napa Junction, Shearer, and Phillips Elementary Schools. More than 400 children in 23 public preschool classes across Napa County are learning rich vocabulary on a daily basis through collaborative play, teacher-led discussions, and an award-winning app called "Footsteps2Brilliance," which exposes preschoolers to stories and games in English and Spanish.

In 2015, NapaLearns and the Napa County Office of Education partnered to purchase a perpetual license to make the app available to any preschooler in Napa County at no cost. Parents can get access to the app on the NCOE website, napacoe.org, or by attending one of the many workshops NCOE offers at schools throughout the year.

The NCOE-operated preschool program has been nationally recognized (Bright Spots in Hispanic Education, Center for Digital Education's Curriculum award, and the League of Innovative Schools' Digital Innovation in Learning award) for its Digital Early Literacy program using iPads and the Footsteps app in combination with outstanding teachers who are preparing all of their students for success in kindergarten.

The Early Learning Initiative's partnership with NCOE for high quality preschool opportunities and Parent University, for parent involvement and education, deserves the continued attention of funders who believe in equity and success for all children.

Peg Maddocks, Executive Director

NapaLearns