

Reading ahead: NJ school district's app lets parents access entire curriculum

By **Dino Flammia** October 28, 2016 1:51 AM



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In a first-of-its-kind move in the Garden State, the Englewood Public School District is paying for an app that will get kids learning even before they're old enough to enroll.

The app, expected to launch in January, is being specially designed to line up with the material taught in Englewood schools. Anyone in town can download the app, free of charge, and their young children can have immediate access to activities that line up with the district's curriculum, in English or Spanish languages.

"If the kids of the community can start to use that, we're getting a head start on what we want to teach them," said Superintendent Robert Kravitz.

And if the parent chooses to enroll their child in the public school system, the district will have a better handle on the student's knowledge of math and reading, thanks to information from the app.

"With any school, there's an adjustment period. We can eliminate that adjustment period and get them right on the task of learning," Kravitz said.

Kravitz said kids' brains are like sponges, and the younger they can start learning — even as young as 6 months — the better.

The app, designed by Footsteps2Brilliance, is part of the Clinton Global Initiative, which targets the world's most pressing challenges in a number of areas, including education. It's been used elsewhere across the country, lining up with local lesson plans, but this would be the New Jersey debut.

According to Kravitz, the district will put out about \$40,000 a year for the program. But he claims it's "a wash" because the district will save money by not having to purchase books that students and their parents will already own through the app.



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