



WHITEPAPER

# LITERACY BREAKTHROUGH

A Game-Changing Strategy





## INTRODUCTION

The impact of the pandemic on students' literacy skills has been substantial. According to *The Education Recovery Scorecard*, a 2024 report co-authored by Harvard and Stanford, experts anticipate that it will take 2 years to close the 3rd-grade reading achievement gap.

The most vulnerable learners, who were already struggling to keep up before the pandemic, have been hit the hardest. This underscores the urgent need for effective intervention strategies. *The Education Recovery Scorecard* highlights that the largest pandemic-related achievement gap is between high- and low-poverty districts, with students in the highest-poverty districts experiencing a sharp decline in achievement—42 percent loss of grade level for reading and up to 70 percent in math.

Despite the willingness, effort, and talent of educators, many schools struggle to effectively serve students due to a lack of effective strategies and scalable tools. Footsteps2Brilliance™, an evidence-based literacy company, was created to solve this problem. We provide next-generation interactive digital tools to accelerate student achievement, offer real-time data, and integrate seamlessly into the classroom.

The encouraging news is that school leaders have the potential to exceed expectations on closing the 3rd-grade reading achievement gap. By implementing Footsteps2Brilliance's intervention strategies, student literacy growth can triple in one year, providing a pathway for students to regain, or surpass, their pre-pandemic achievement levels.



# STUDENT LITERACY SCORES GROW **3X FASTER**

National data collected from the 2023-24 Footsteps2Brilliance Growth Score Report™ provided evidence that students who engaged with Footsteps2Brilliance for just 45 minutes per week experienced a remarkable acceleration in their literacy skills. In just 10 weeks, these students tripled their literacy scores compared to those who did not use the platform.



The **Footsteps2Brilliance Literacy Growth Score™** is a data-driven report of a student's academic growth and progress based on completed lessons and activities over a defined length of time.



## Footsteps2Brilliance's Accelerated Pathway to 3<sup>rd</sup>-Grade Reading Proficiency

*Growth scores for students who used Footsteps2Brilliance's classroom-aligned activities for just 45 minutes per week over a period of 10 weeks tripled their literacy growth, accelerating their 3-grade reading proficiency.*

# THE GAME-CHANGING STRATEGY FOR LITERACY ACCELERATION

At Footsteps2Brilliance we understand that effective digital tools enhance a high-quality core curriculum and amplify, not replace, excellent teaching. We provide teachers with **next generation digital tools** that align with their classroom lessons and facilitate data-driven, differentiated instruction. This alignment is crucial as it ensures that students are engaged in deliberate practice connected to their classroom instruction.

The positive effects of Footsteps2Brilliance's aligned digital tools on student achievement can be attributed to:

- » **Evidence-Based Approach to Literacy.** By incorporating strategies from the Science of Reading, students develop critical foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The curated interactive activities are seamlessly aligned with classroom instruction, ensuring that learning is cohesive and reinforces what students are working on in class.
- » **Student Empowerment.** Interactive game-based activities foster joyful learning and a growth mindset, helping students learn how to learn. It allows students to choose their path and pace, promoting awareness and ownership of their progress.
- » **Emergent Bilingual Student Support.** By allowing seamless toggling between English and Spanish, we help emergent bilingual students develop language and literacy skills in both languages, and build their confidence in language acquisition.



## Core Aligned Activities Promote Deliberate Practice

Practice is essential to mastery. But, the practice must be deliberate. "...when practice is deliberate, learning is retained for a longer period of time." Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey. (2020) The Footsteps2Brilliance curriculum is specifically aligned to core ELA curricula making it easy for deliberate practice to occur both inside and outside of the classroom.

### Four Conditions of Deliberate Practice

1. The skill being practiced is *challenging*.
2. The learner sets a *goal*.
3. The learner *engages purposefully* in the practice.
4. The learner receives *feedback*.

Doug Fisher & Nancy Frey (2020); Kellogg and Whiteford (2009)

» **Data-Driven Decision Making.** Actionable data and area of weakness reports empower teachers to utilize data effectively and tailor instruction for each student. With the touch of a button, educators can assign and scaffold concepts needing reinforcement, ensuring differentiated instruction and enhancing the overall learning experience.

» **Family and After-School Engagement.** Providing caregivers with access to high-quality educational content fosters a strong school-to-home connection. This empowers caregivers to actively participate in their children’s learning. It also provides a supportive environment for students, offering opportunities for remediation and pre-teaching at home and in after-school settings.

## Sample Area of Difficulty Report

Class Proficiency	Flexible Groups	Area of Difficulty
Domain	Skill	Student
Logic & Reasoning	Identify "how many" in a set.	Corina Miller 64%
Phonological Awareness	Identify the initial sound in a word.	Nelson Dean 72% Miguel Hill 68% Emanuel Green 67% Nelson Dean 66% Cynthia Miller 65% Tiffany Bolton 64% Nashalee Cook 62%
Phonics	Identify short /r/ vowel sound.	Nelson Dean 64% Tiffany Bolton 64% Miguel Hill 61% Nelson Dean 61% Emanuel Green 59%
Logic & Reasoning	Attend to details.	Nelson Dean 61%
Logic & Reasoning	Order objects or events in a logical sequence.	Miguel Hill 59% Cynthia Miller 59% Nashalee Cook 59%
Phonics	Identify letter sound for j.	Miguel Hill 58% Tiffany Bolton 54% Nelson Dean 53% Miguel Hill 53% Nelson Dean 53%
Language	Demonstrate understanding of domain-specific vocabulary.	Cynthia Miller 53%
Logic & Reasoning	Identify matching sets.	Corina Miller 61% Miguel Hill 61%
Reading Comprehension	Make inferences based on details from a fictional text.	Miguel Hill 60% Cynthia Miller 59% Emanuel Green 59%
Phonological Awareness	Identify words that rhyme.	Amelia Dean 54% Nelson Dean 52% Cynthia Miller 52% Emanuel Green 52%

## Powerful Proof: Third-Party Evidence of Our Impact

In addition to our own Footsteps2Brilliance Literacy Growth Report™, we have triangulated our data with nationally recognized assessments, confirming the positive impact on student literacy.

» **Manassas City Public Schools, VA:**

PALS Kindergarten scores improved by 235% in 10 weeks.

» **Osceola County, FL:**

Over 90% met or exceeded Florida VPK benchmarks after 12 weeks.

» **Napa Valley Unified School District, CA:**

CELDT scores improved by 31 points.

» **Middletown Public Schools, CT:**

AIMSweb reading scores improved by 175%.

» **Rialto Unified School District, CA:**

CAASPP 3rd-Grade State Test showed an 11% increase of students reading proficiently in just 18 months.

# FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION MODELS

Footsteps2Brilliance offers a flexible and customizable implementation model to suit your specific needs, guaranteeing results. Here are various ways our solution can be tailored to maximize impact across different program types and areas of focus.

*Flexibility and adaptability in teaching allows educators to adapt to meet individual student needs and enhance the learning experience. The ability to implement a program in these ways enables teachers to more easily create an inclusive and supportive learning environment.*

PROGRAM TYPE	AREAS OF IMPACT	IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS
<b>School-wide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilingual/Dual Language</li> <li>3rd Grade Readiness</li> <li>Supplemental/Intervention for ELA Core</li> <li>Summer School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole Class</li> <li>Small Group</li> <li>One-on-One</li> <li>Family Engagement</li> </ul>
<b>District-Wide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilingual/Dual Language</li> <li>3rd Grade Readiness</li> <li>Supplemental/Intervention for ELA Core</li> <li>Summer School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole Class</li> <li>Small Group</li> <li>One-on-One</li> <li>Family Engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Community-Wide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten Readiness</li> <li>Bilingual/Dual Language</li> <li>3rd Grade Readiness</li> <li>Supplemental/Intervention for ELA Core</li> <li>Summer School</li> <li>Family/Parent Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Access</li> <li>Whole Class</li> <li>Small Group</li> <li>One-on-One</li> <li>Family Engagement</li> <li>Parent University</li> <li>Extended Day Programs</li> </ul>
<b>Before &amp; After School Tutoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3rd Grade Readiness</li> <li>Supplemental for ELA Core</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-on-One</li> <li>Small Group</li> </ul>



## ABOUT FOOTSTEPS2BRILLIANCE

Footsteps2Brilliance is the leading provider of effective next-generation digital tools, bilingual content, and learning experiences that connect school and home, and enhance, not replace, excellent teaching. Since 2012 we've committed our research and resources to closing the reading achievement gap for all students from birth through elementary school using a collaborative impact approach. In partnership with educators, families, and communities we are unlocking brilliance and empowering students to realize their full potential.

Learn more at [www.Footsteps2Brilliance.com](http://www.Footsteps2Brilliance.com).

### References:

*The Education Recovery Scorecard. The First Year of Pandemic Recovery. A District-Level Analysis* by Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University and The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University. January 2024 <https://educationrecoverycard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ERS-Report-Final-1.31.pdf>

Fisher, Doug and Frey, Nancy. (2020) "Make Deliberate Practice Part of Your Classroom Routine." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol.63 (5), 593-596.