



## BROTHERS READ TOGETHER & CREATE STORIES USING EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY APP



### Brothers read together & create stories using early childhood literacy app

Four-year-old James Gainer is an explosion of energy. He runs, he tumbles, and he loves to read and make up stories with his big brother John using the Footsteps2Brilliance app.

Their mother, Mary, says since they downloaded the app over the summer, her boys' appetites for reading have increased.

"It didn't take long for all of us to fall in love with this app. It not only kept them interested and excited to read over the summer, but it also advanced their reading and comprehension skills," she says. "And the app goes beyond reading – they love to record themselves reading aloud and add in sound effects, really bring the story to life. Then they play back the recording and laugh. It's more than just a fun app – they are improving reading skills, practicing reading aloud, and dramatizing the stories."

John, a first-grader at Lamar Elementary, is one of Top 10 students who hit high reading targets over the summer using the new app. The students will be honored during the upcoming GISD School Board meeting Oct. 15 and a pep rally at Greenville High School Oct. 18.

### Growing confidence in reading, writing, and storytelling

This week, John and James settled into a reading chair in the Lamar library to demonstrate how the app works. John records himself reading a few sentences and then roaring, which he plays back immediately with a grin. He says he also likes to draw and create his own stories in the My Journal section on the app.

"It has some smart features, and you get to see the words and pictures go together and move up to different levels," he says.

Mary says she loves to see her boys discovering new things on the app.

"They share stories and then get silly and rewrite them or make new ones. They feed off of each other in this really positive and constructive way," Mary says. "James just started PreK, and he was reading when he started. Doing this app with John was a big part of that. As James advanced, John would encourage him and show him new things to try. They would even compete to see who could answer questions first. You learn more about something when you teach it, and in sharing his knowledge with James, John gained greater mastery and confidence in reading, writing, and storytelling – and James did too."

When asked about screen time, Mary said, "They are growing up in a world where this is how technology is, and they need to learn skills to navigate that world. Still, when they get screen time on my phone or a tablet, they are mostly on educational apps that work on reading and/or math. Apps like this are perfect in a pinch, too – waiting in the pickup line at school or at the doctor's office. When John has taekwondo, James can work on reading while we wait! Bedtime reading is for hard copy books only. They each read, we work on sight words and spelling words, and then Ethan (their dad) and I take turns reading to them. The boys have a large library of books at home, and we also take weekend trips to the public library. You have to find a balance that works for your family."

### About Rally Round Reading

Rally Round Reading is an citywide early childhood literacy initiative, powered by Footsteps2Brilliance. The GISD School Board purchased the app, which is available to anyone in Greenville and can be downloaded through a local wifi connection. There is a virtual boundary – or geofence – that makes the app downloadable in Greenville. Once downloaded, the app can be used on the device (phone, iPad, laptop, etc.) anywhere.

GISD is providing this research-based, high quality, online reading program that offers both English and Spanish stories for ALL children in Greenville, ages birth to third grade. It is GISD's goal to promote early childhood literacy and expand awareness of the app to all children from birth to grade 3 throughout the City of Greenville.

"This is a citywide literacy model that has the potential to have a transformative effect on our community," Greenville ISD Superintendent Dr. Demetrus Liggins said. "Although we are starting with our students, everyone in the community can participate, not just those in our schools."

The app contains books and games that allow children to enjoy reading and writing. Greenville children, families and community members can also download the app and join in the fun.

The Top 10 Rally Round Reading summer readers were:

- Carter Ellsworth, Bowie first-grader
- Aliyah Essix-Brown, Bowie Elementary third-grader
- John Gainer, Lamar Elementary first-grader
- Paxton Jarvis, Bowie Elementary second-grader
- Peyton Jarvis, Bowie Elementary third-grader
- Ava Martinez, Lamar Elementary kindergartner
- Annabelle Rios, Carver Elementary fifth-grader
- Julian Rios, Carver Elementary second-grader
- Salvador Rios, Carver Elementary kindergartner
- Aurora Stafford, relative of community member

**Since the app was launched in May of 2019, 105 GISD students and other children have logged on and learned. They have read a total of 8.9 million words and over 2,716 hours.**

To learn more about Rally Round Reading, email [RallyRoundReading@greenvilleisd.com](mailto:RallyRoundReading@greenvilleisd.com).

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