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University of Kansas

How Health Care and Early Education Are Coming Together to Bridge the Word Gap



What is the Word Gap?

By age 3, low-income children have heard roughly **30 million fewer** words than their wealthier peers.

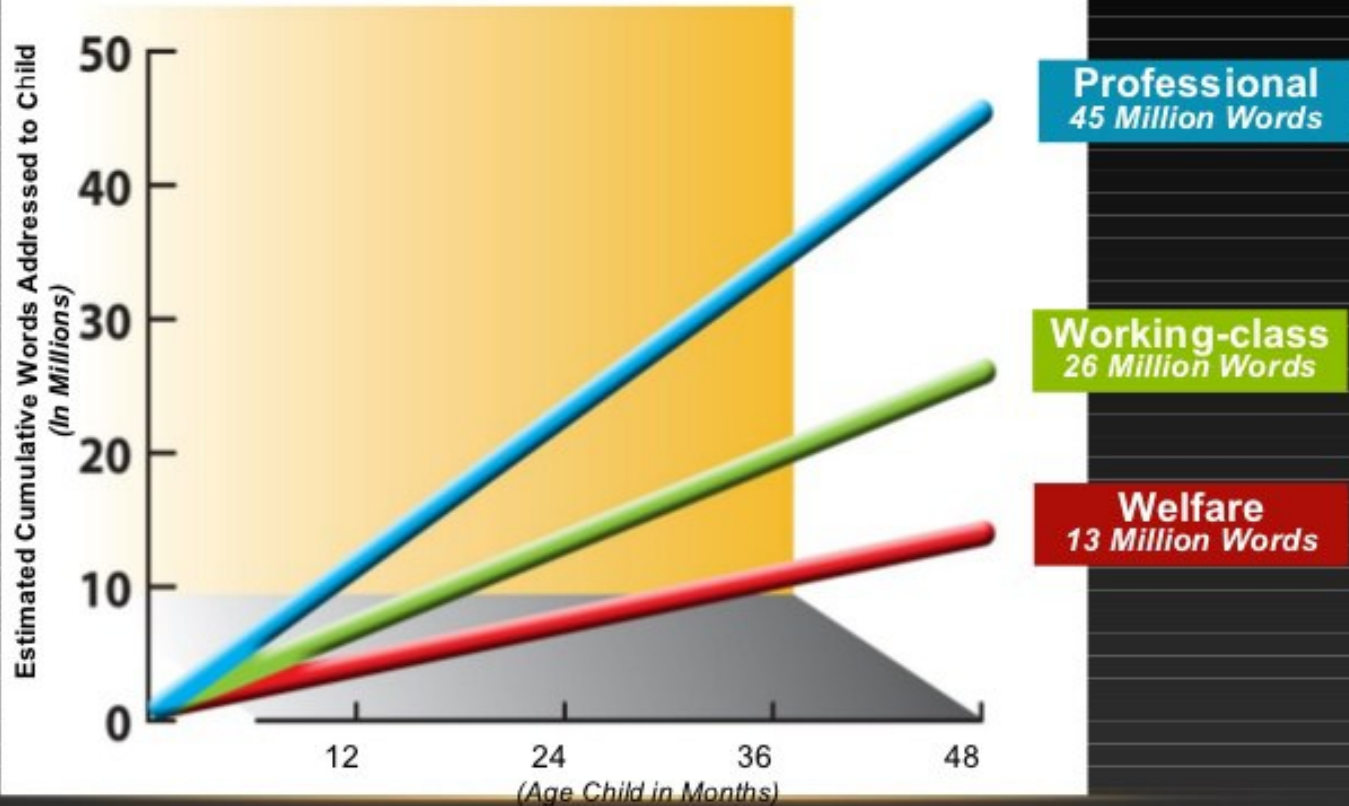


This word gap can be seen in *brain scans*.

Source: Rice University

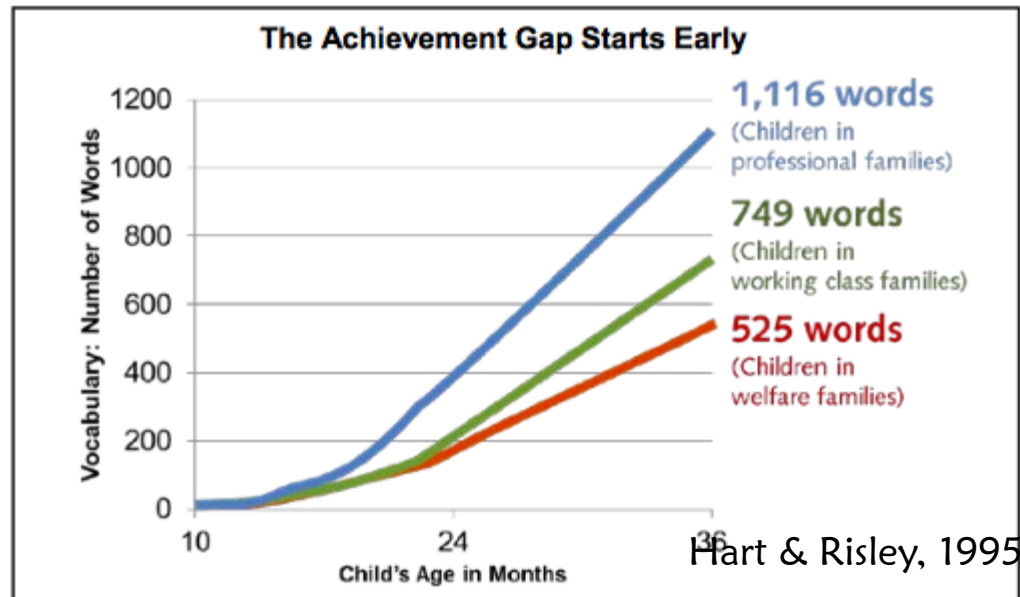
THE 30 MILLION WORD GAP

Estimated Cumulative Words Addressed to Child
(In Millions)

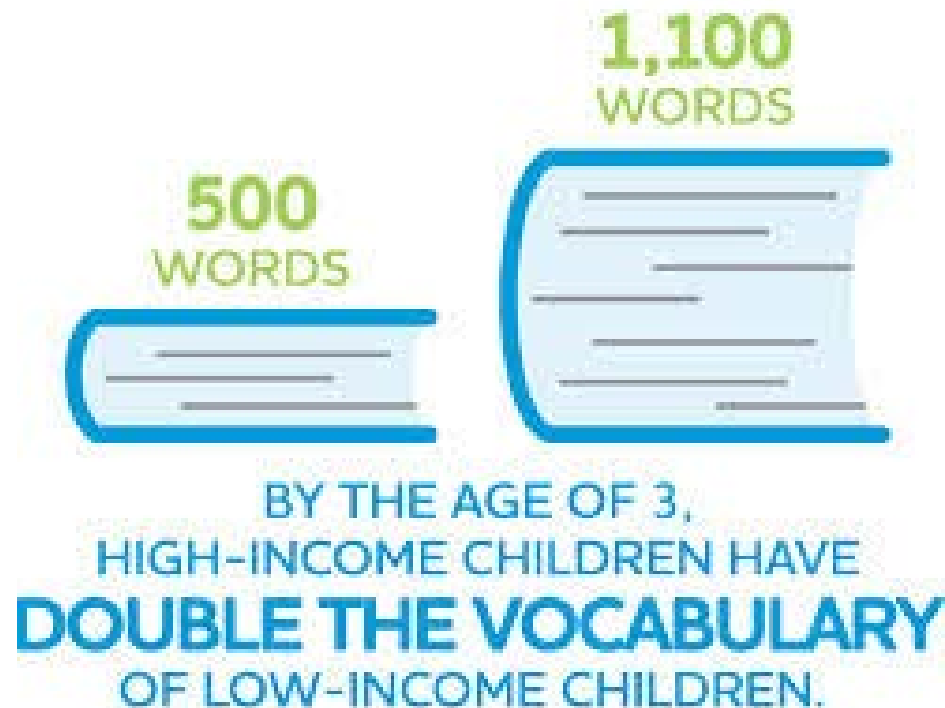


Hart, B. & Risley, T. R. (1995) Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children

The Language Exposure Gap Sets the Stage for Children's Vocabulary Gap



A Startling Statistic





LACK OF THIRD GRADE READING SKILLS CASTS A LIFELONG SHADOW

4x

Third graders who cannot read at grade level are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

6x

And if the child also lives in poverty, he or she is six times more likely to drop out of high school.



The Good News!



We know what it takes to bridge the word gap.

We have evidence-based interventions for promoting language in infants and toddlers.

These are easy to do behaviors that parents and caregivers can embed into their everyday routines.



Bad News

The word hasn't gotten out how important it is to engage and interact and talk with children.



What Will It Take to “Move the Needle” on the Word Gap?

PREVENTION

- **Broader public awareness** of the importance of talking with young children
- **Greater variety of programs** spreading the message and giving parents and caregivers training and advice on ways to interact to promote language



What Will it Take to Move the Needle on the Word Gap?

INTERVENTION:

- **Use of evidence-based strategies** that can change how parents/caregivers/early educators interact with children to promote language
- **Interventions that help parents and caregivers** make a habit of talking and interacting with their children, tuning in, taking turns

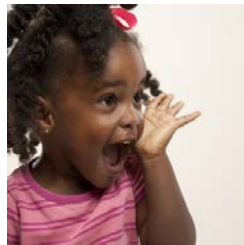


150+ nationally recognized researchers and practitioners from multiple sectors creating a coordinated research agenda addressing the Word Gap.

Funded by HRSA in Fall 2014.

GOAL of the BWG Research Network

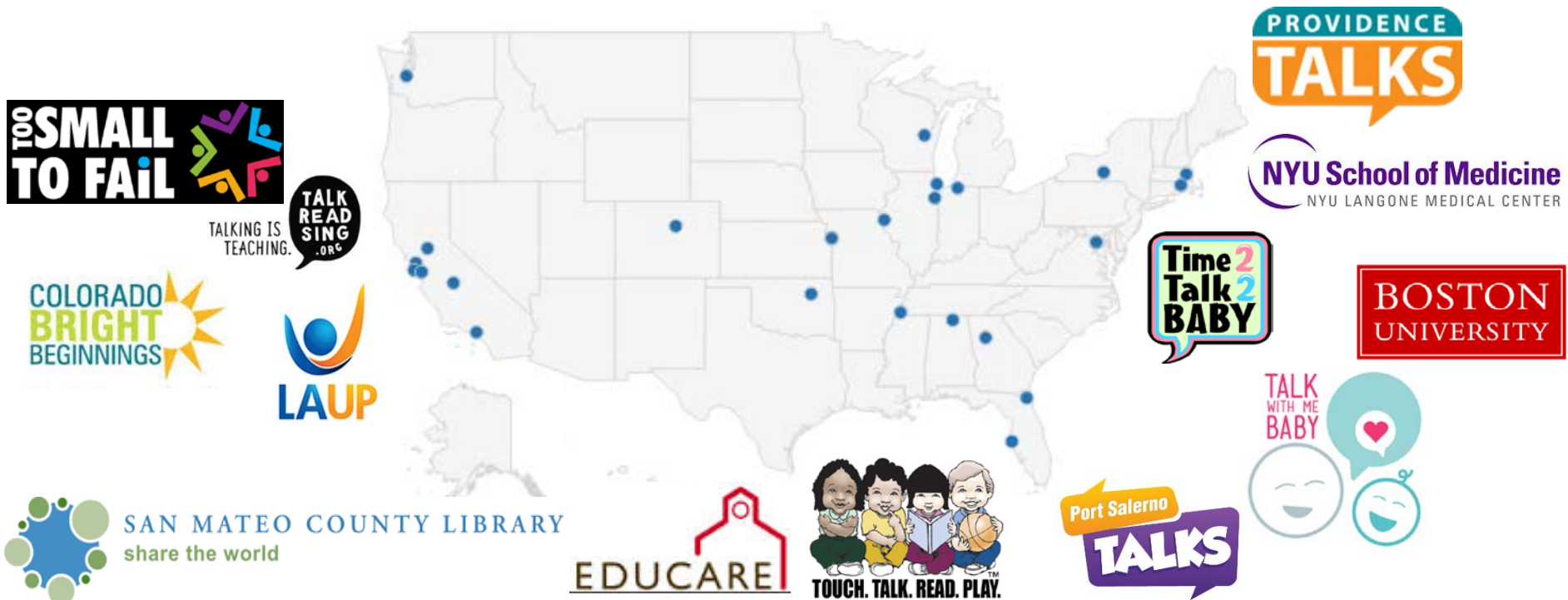
Reducing the vocabulary gap of young children in poverty
by increasing their early language learning experiences



What the BWG Research Network Is Doing

1. Synthesizing research to find out “what works” to promote children’s language
2. Sharing most effective practices with practitioners from multiple disciplines
3. Identifying research gaps and developing new studies and new innovations
4. Growing a Practice-Based Research Collaborative

Currently recruiting a 2nd cohort of research-program partners to join Practice-Based Research Collaborative



Community- Wide Public Awareness Intervention



Too Small to Fail

Weaving Early Brain and Language Development
into the Fabric of Communities



Too Small to Fail: Creating “Talking is Teaching” Communities

- Creates public awareness and action community campaigns public awareness to promote the importance of early brain and language development
- Empowers parents with tools to ***talk, read, and sing*** with their young children from birth
- Organizes multiple sectors within a community: partnerships with pediatricians, hospitals, faith-based leaders, community based organizations
- Meets parents where they are to help them prepare their children for success by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions anytime, anywhere

Providing parents with language interaction tips at the laundry, supermarket, or playground



A multi-sector collaboration to foster early literacy development of NYC children



City's First Schools Partners

- Brooklyn & Queens Public Libraries
- Reach Out and Read (Pediatric Setting)
- Video Interaction Project (Pediatric Setting)
- United Way
- Committee for Hispanic Children and Families
- Jumpstart—early childhood education organization
- Literacy Inc.—community-based literacy organization
- Parent-Child Home Program-home visiting program



Population-Based Interventions in Pediatric Settings



A pink speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text "Hello, Baby!".

Hello,
Baby!

Talk With Me Baby

GEORGIA'S LANGUAGE NUTRITION
STRATEGY TO BRIDGE THE WORD GAP

The Language Nutrition Solution

PARENTS AS THEIR BABY'S FIRST AND BEST TEACHER



LITTLE BRAINS NEED LOTS OF WORDS TO GROW AND THRIVE

Just like a child needs an adequate amount of food for physical growth, a child also needs adequate language for his or her brain development.

In the same way that the quality and nutritious value of the food differs and matters for a child's growth, the quality of language is important.



A Call to Action

ADVANTAGE OF AN INITIATIVE THAT BEGINS WITH NURSES



PRENATAL:
3RD TRIMESTER –
TALK TO BABY IN UTERO



PERINATAL:
WELCOME BABY
IN THE LANGUAGE
OF YOUR HEART



POSTNATAL:
EMPHASIZE
LANGUAGE IN 7
WELL-CHECKUPS
IN THE FIRST YEAR

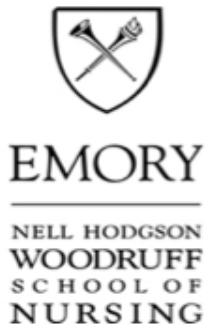


LIFELONG:
CONFIDENT AND
ENGAGED PARENTS
RAISING STRONG
READERS

NURSE-DELIVERED **TRANSFER OF CAPACITY** FROM BEGINNING OF
3RD TRIMESTER TO END OF CHILD'S FIRST YEAR **BUILDS PARENT'S**
CAPACITY TO PROVIDE LANGUAGE NUTRITION TO INFANTS.

Collectively Impacting Language Nutrition

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATIONS:



The Georgia Coalition for
English Learners



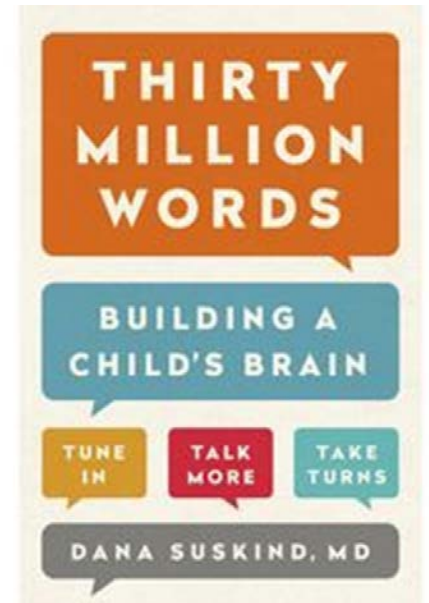


Using Pediatric Primary Care for Population-Level Delivery of Low-Cost Literacy Intervention

National program that makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care

- Evidence-based with more than 15 studies showing impacts
- Reaches 4.5 million children/year in US or more than 25% of all low income children ages 6 months to 5 years in US
- Low cost: \$25/child/year

Individual
Interventions
Teaching Parents
Specific
Language-
Promoting
Strategies



Tools for Advancing Language in Kids

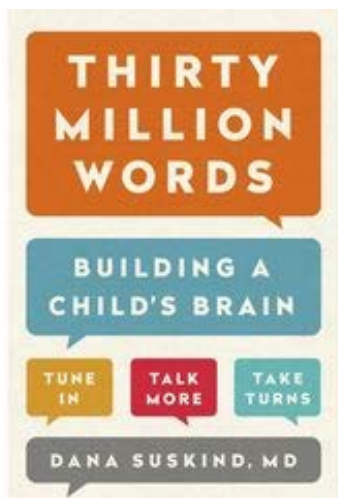


Video Interaction Project

Alan Mendelsohn, M.D.
NYU Langone Health

Intervention to support
parent-child interaction delivered one-on-one during each
pediatric well-child visit

Individual Interventions Aimed at Parents and Early Educators



Dana Suskind, M.D.
University of Chicago

Tune In: Notice what the child is focused on and talk about that. Respond when child communicates.

Talk More: Narrate day to day routines.

Take Turns: Keep the conversation going.



Dale Walker, Ph.D.
University of Kansas

Promoting Communication Strategies

- Arrange Environment
- Follow Child's Lead
- Comment & Label
- Imitate & Expand
- Open-Ended Questions
- Time-delay
- Positive Attention
- Providing Choices

Take-Home Points

Multi-sector collaboration is taking place:

- Sectors working together to design community-wide public awareness campaigns—a common message
- Agencies across sectors finding ways to work together toward similar goals in early literacy
- However, most multi-sector work is working in parallel (working side-by-side on similar goals).

Challenges for Future Work

More integration of work being done across sectors:

- Sharing of data across sectors—so data from pediatric sector can inform early education setting or home visiting
- More screening in pediatric settings and referral to more intensive services in home visiting and early education

When we work together:

We can develop Word Gap interventions that can

- Strengthen parental bonds
- Promote resilience and influence multiple outcomes
- Equip children with a buffer against adversity
- Protect children against health conditions and diseases

Acknowledgments

- City's First Readers: <http://www.citysfirstreaders.com/>.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- PC TALKS: <http://www.talk.ku.edu/projects/>.
- Reach Out and Read: <http://www.reachoutandread.org/>
- Talk with Me Baby: <http://www.talkwithmebaby.org/>.
- Too Small to Fail: <http://toosmall.org/>.
- Thirty Million Words: <http://thirtymillionwords.org/>
- Video Interaction Project: <http://www.videointeractionproject.org/>
- Walker, D., Bigelow, K. M., & Harjusola-Webb, S. (2008). Increasing communication and language-learning opportunities for infants and toddlers. *Young Exceptional Children Monograph*, Series 10.

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Bridging the Word Gap Research Network

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