

Take Time. Talk!

An Intervention to Improve Early Language
Development in Low-Income Populations

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Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)



In 2004, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)

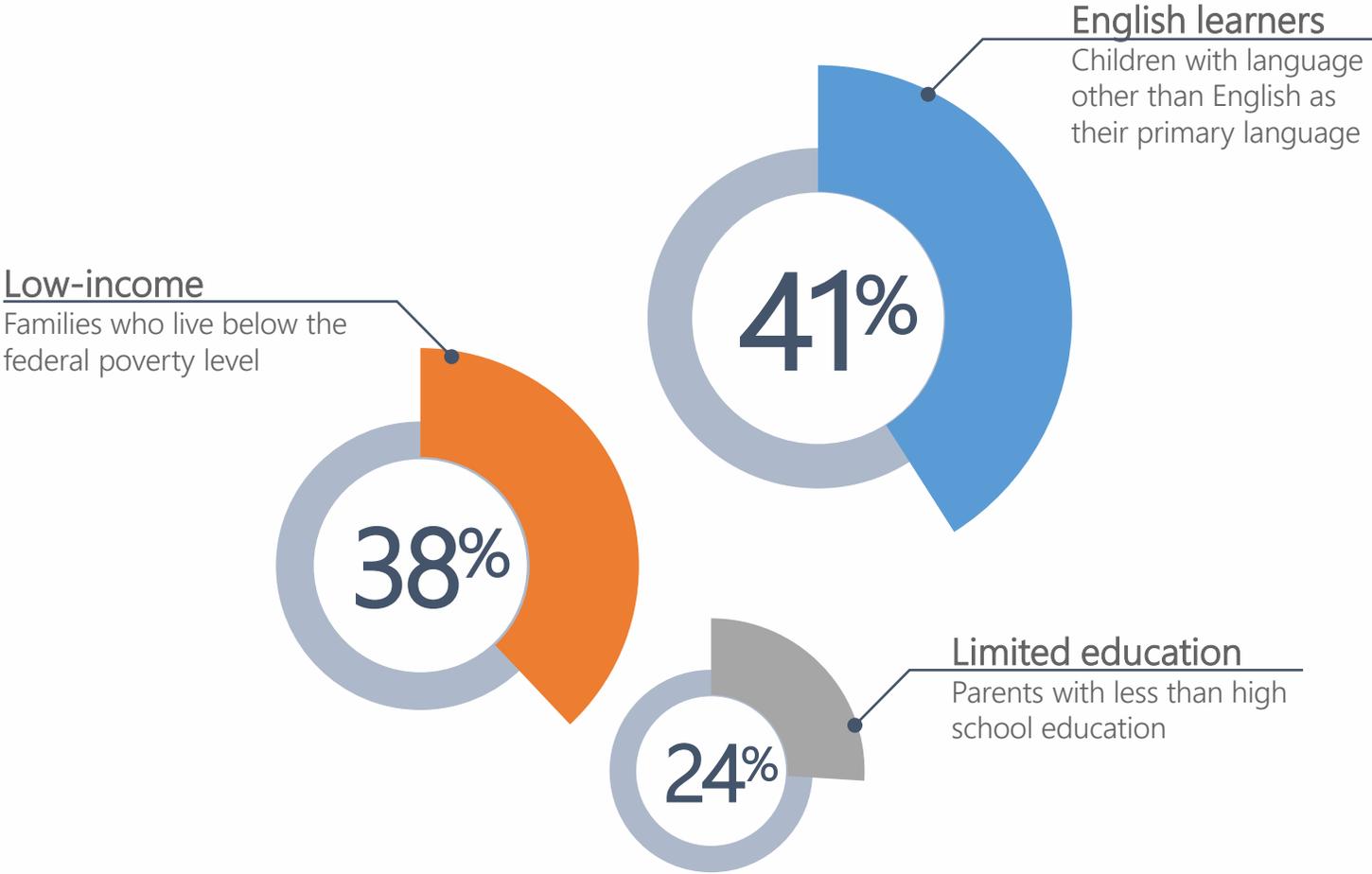


was created as the result of a contract from First 5 LA



to establish access to high-quality preschool for children
in Los Angeles County.

LAUP provides preschool to some of the neediest families.



In 2014, LAUP created “Take Time. Talk!” as a Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) America commitment.



“Take Time. Talk!” is a tool designed to help increase the exposure to language among at-risk children.

The tool helps parents and caregivers understand the power and benefits of engaging in positive interactions with infants, toddlers, and young children.



What is the “word gap” between low- and high-income children?

Hart & Risley (1995) found that by the age of 3, children in high-income families have heard 30 million more words than children in low-income families. They termed the disparity between low- and high-income children the **word gap**.



“We found we could easily increase the size of the children’s vocabularies by teaching them new words. But we could not accelerate the rate of vocabulary growth so that it would continue beyond direct teaching; we could not change the developmental trajectory.” (Hart & Risley, 1995)

Additional studies indicate that high-SES children:

exhibit more vocabulary knowledge and stronger language processing skills than their low-SES peers at 18 months;

have parents who use longer sentences and more gestures;

have parents who are more inclined to talk to their children to start a conversation, and not to direct behavior.

What has been done to reduce the word gap?

Many interventions have attempted to increase the **literacy skills** of low-SES children. These interventions have focused largely on encouraging parents to read to their children.

What has been done to reduce the word gap?

Other interventions have targeted a wider range of **language and parenting skills**, with the goal of helping parents create a richer language environment for children in the home. One of the most notable efforts is the *Thirty Million Words* project by Dana Suskind from the University of Chicago:

Intervention consisted of 8 weekly home visits, each lasting an hour;

The program increased parents' knowledge of child development and also increased how much language they used with their children;

These changes could lead to long-term impacts on children's language development.



A recent program, *Providence Talks*, is similar to the *Thirty Million Words* intervention. The pilot project for *Providence Talks* provided 13 coaching sessions in the home over the course of eight months.



Preliminary results suggest that:

All families who participated in four or more coaching sessions increased the quantity of language used in the home by approximately **10%**.

The impact of the program was the most significant for families who began the program below the 50th percentile for the quantity of adult words used in the home.

For these families, the quantity of adult words used in the home increased by **50%**.

LAUP's "Take Time. Talk!" was designed primarily as a tool for parents to help reduce the word gap in Los Angeles County.



The project was motivated by the research of Dr. Robert Putnam at Harvard University, who coined the term "Goodnight Moon time" to refer to the greater amount of time that parents from higher-SES families spent helping their children to increase their literacy skills.

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The tool is designed to be an engaging way to teach parents and caregivers how to use **open-ended questions** and **more words** when interacting with children.

LAUP and its nine community partners have committed to distributing the bilingual tool to an estimated **100,000** parents and caregivers through physical cards, online distribution, and through media partners like Univision.

In 2015-16, LAUP distributed copies of the tool to all parents at our 256 preschool providers.





The Take Time. Talk! materials are available as table tents and accordion brochures. They are also available for download free of charge on the LAUP website.

The Take Time. Talk! tool was developed in collaboration with national experts on language development in young children.



Dr. Anne Fernald (Stanford) refined the English and Spanish versions of the tool. Her team of language experts ensured that the tool properly spoke to parents.

Dana Suskind, from the University of Chicago and the *Thirty Million Words* study, also reviewed and approved the content.

For each of four settings, the tool provides open-ended conversation starters for parents to engage with their children.

Two sets of conversation starters are given for each setting: for infants and toddlers (age 0-3) and for preschool-age children (age 3-5), in both English and Spanish.

At the Grocery Store

Engage your children in the experience of grocery shopping. While walking around the store, find opportunities to initiate conversation about what they see.

- ◆ “We’re going to pick out some vegetables for the salad we’ll make for dinner.”
- ◆ “I see you pointing at the strawberries. Let’s buy more so we can have them with lunch.”
- ◆ “We picked out the chicken we need for dinner. Now we’re going to find the rice, and then the vegetables.”



LAUP's Take Time. Talk! pilot intervention was conducted in collaboration with the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL).



Two branches of LAPL, in conjunction with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, provided free lunch to children ages 18 and under on summer weekdays in 2016.

The lunch program was selected for the pilot intervention to draw in local low-income families with young children.



The Take Time. Talk! intervention was provided once per week at each of two library sites, for a period of two hours at a time.

A bilingual trainer with experience in working with families approached families one at a time, and asked them for permission to show them the Take Time. Talk! tool.

If parents wanted to hear about the tool, the trainer demonstrated its purpose and intended usage, and explained the importance of **high-quality language input** for children. They were then given a copy of the tool to keep.

Parent Survey

After the trainer showed the tool to parents, the parents were asked if they would be willing to fill out a brief survey. They were encouraged to fill out a survey every time they visited the library lunch, to track their learning.

Completed surveys were entered into a random drawing to win incentives (Target \$10 gift cards).

Parent Survey

Parents who had not previously heard of Take Time. Talk! were asked to rate the following:

- How easy they found the information to understand;

- Their self-reported understanding of child language development, before and after the tool;

- Whether they intended to use the tool with their child.

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- Whether they intended to use the tool with their child.

Parents who had previously heard of Take Time. Talk! were asked to rate the following:

- How many times they had heard about the tool;

- How much information they remembered from the last time they had heard about the tool;

- How frequently they had used the tool in the last week.

Sample

There were 73 surveys returned, representing a population of 58 unique parents.

Surveys were provided in Spanish and in English; there were 27 Spanish respondents, and 31 English respondents.

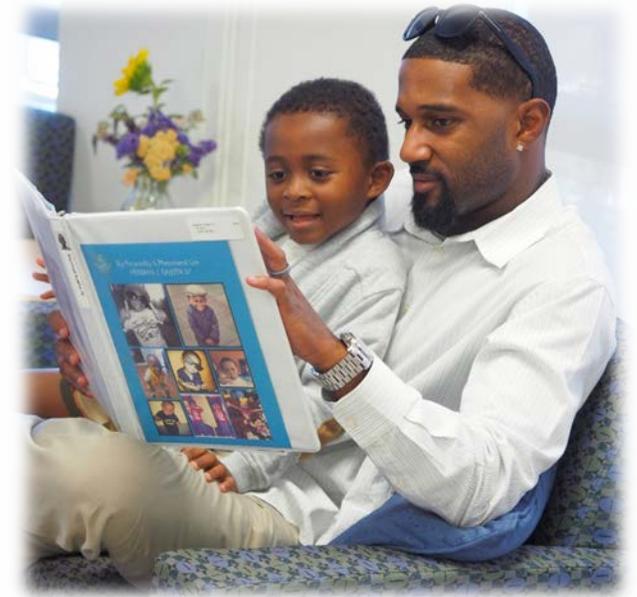
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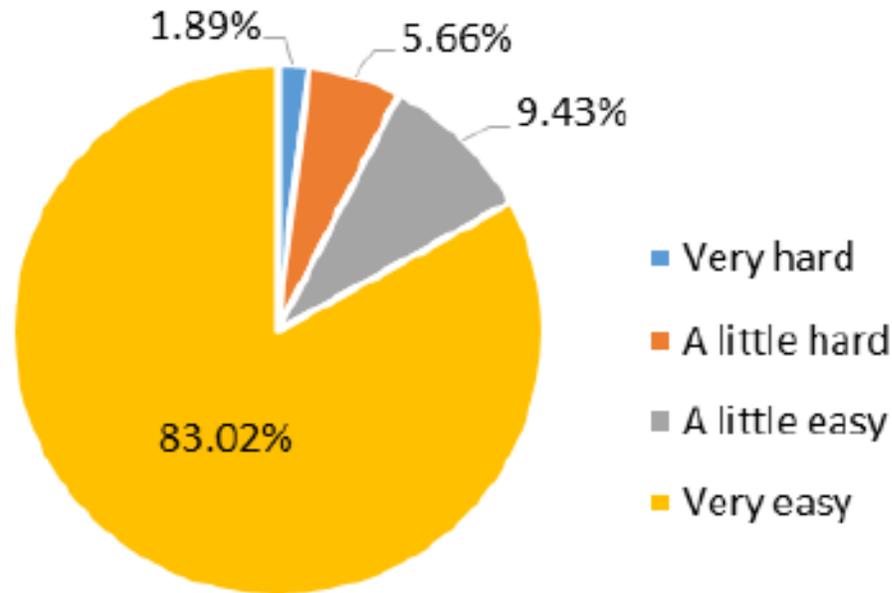
The average age of a child accompanying his/her parent was 5.64 years ($SD=3.55$). Children accompanying their parents ranged in age from 10 months to 17 years old.

Parents were also asked about children who did not accompany their parents to the library. The average number of children per parent was 2.20 ($SD=.70$).



Tool's Ease of Understanding

How Easy To Understand Was TTT Information?



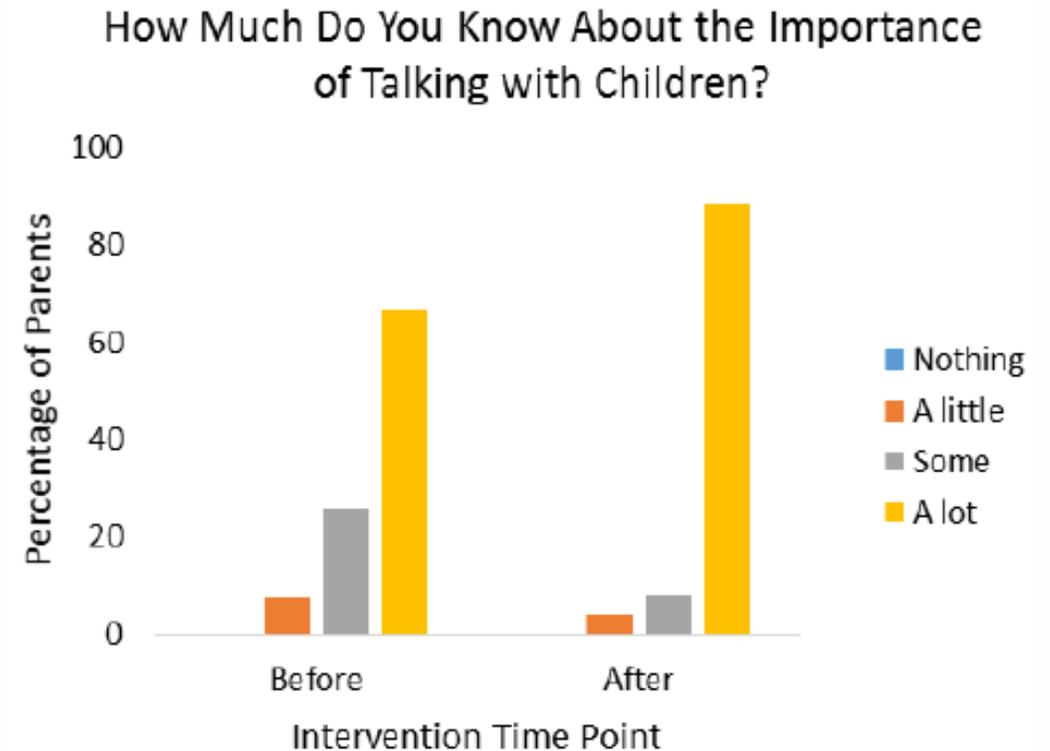
Over 90% of parents reported no problems in understanding the information given about the tool.

Spanish-speaking parents were more likely than English-speaking parents to find the information difficult to understand, suggesting that they may have experienced a comprehension barrier despite the fact that the tool is bilingual.

Parents' Self-Reported Knowledge of the Importance of Talking With Children

Parents' self-reported knowledge about the importance of talking with children appeared to increase as a result of the Take Time. Talk! intervention.

The percentage of parents who reported knowing “some” or “a lot” about the importance of talking with children after the intervention exceeded 95%.



Parents' Usage of the Tool

Usage of TTT Within Past Week

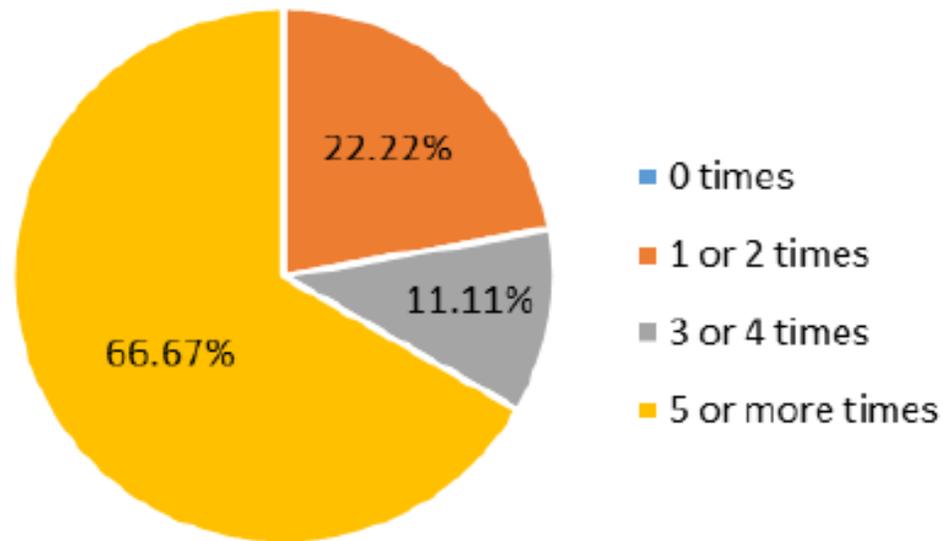


Figure 3. Parents' usage of "Take Time. Talk!"

Over 96% of first-time participants said that they planned to use the tool.

Two-thirds of the 9 parents who were second-time participants said that they used the tool 5 or more times a week.

Recommendations from the Pilot Intervention

Because Spanish-speaking parents reported that they had a more difficult time understanding the information than the English-speaking parents, a dedicated Spanish speaker should participate in future interventions.



If longer-term exposure is desired, it will be useful to add program locations with high rates of repeat attendance.

2016-17 Intervention Using Take Time. Talk!

In 2016-17, LAUP is conducting a parent coaching program designed to boost parent knowledge about early language and literacy, based on “Take Time. Talk!”

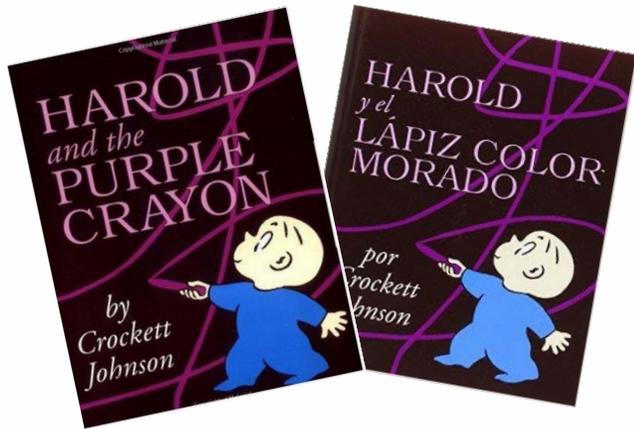
This program and its evaluation will be conducted in partnership with the Abriendo Puertas program at one of LAUP’s preschool sites.

Parents will be invited to attend a once-a-month coaching session in which they will learn about best practices for talking and reading to their young children in order to support early language and literacy.

2016-17 Intervention Using Take Time. Talk!

Coaching sessions will be conducted by an LAUP Family Engagement Specialist at the preschool site.

All parents and children will receive bilingual early literacy resources, including age-appropriate books, educational toys, and copies of the TTT tool.



Evaluation of the Take Time. Talk! Intervention

Parent pre- and post-surveys will be conducted to quantify their learning about early literacy over the course of the program, and to identify the sessions, topics, and resources that were considered to be most helpful.

Parent surveys will also provide information for a formative assessment that will help to refine and improve the coaching program, through collaboration between researchers and Family Engagement Specialists.

Evaluation of the Take Time. Talk! Intervention

Currently, this intervention is still in pilot stage (17 families).

We hope that a finalized version of this intervention will eventually be implemented at multiple sites, and will help to close the word gap between low- and high-income children in Los Angeles County.

Thanks to everyone who made this project possible!

The Clinton Global Initiative

Our Commitment Partners:

California Library Association
California State Library
Families in Schools
First Book
Los Angeles Public Library
Lakeshore Learning
Unite for Literacy
WIC-LA
Univision

Our Advisors:

Dr. Anne Fernald
Dr. Dana Suskind





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www.laup.net