

TALK, READ, SING

HELPING OUR LITTLEST LEARNERS BECOME SCHOOL-READY



**ARKANSAS
ADVOCATES**
FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

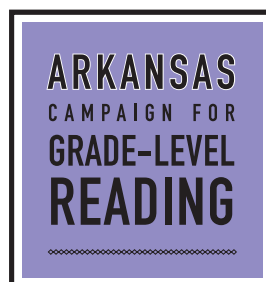
**ARKANSAS
CAMPAIGN FOR
GRADE-LEVEL
READING**

April 2017

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF) and the
Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (AR-GLR)

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TALK, READ, SING: HELPING OUR LITTLEST LEARNERS BECOME SCHOOL-READY

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LET'S TALK!

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” aims to motivate parents and caregivers to talk, read, and sing more frequently with their young children from birth. More than half of Arkansas children start kindergarten unprepared, lagging behind their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills. Research shows that simple, everyday interactions with young children – like describing objects seen during a walk or bus ride, singing songs, or telling stories – can build their vocabularies, prepare them for school, and lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IS YOUR CHILD'S FOUNDATION

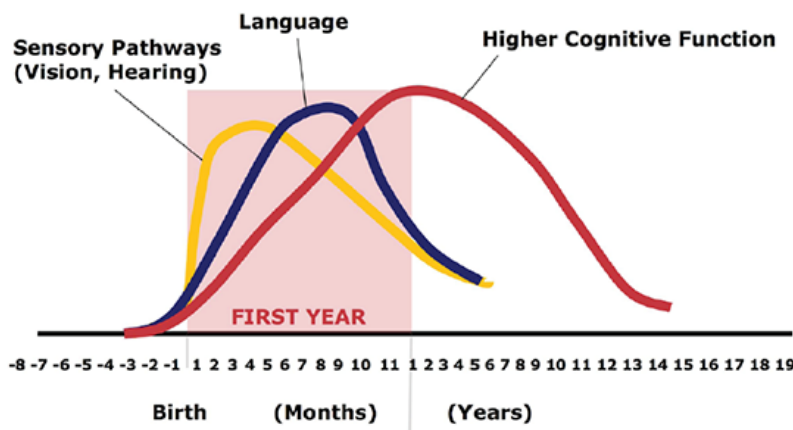
A child's earliest experiences form the foundation for all future learning. They provide the “wiring” that they use to learn how to read, how to critically think, how to set and reach goals, and how to adapt to new situations. The quality of these early learning experiences also strongly influences health, social, and economic outcomes.¹

The most critical period of growth in a human brain happens during the first three years of life. Before age three, 85 percent of a child's core brain structure is formed.² The brain experiences an explosion of activity by building billions of simple neural connections that form a framework for more complex connections later.³ This rapid early brain growth is why it is much easier for a toddler to learn a new language than it is for an adult.

Researchers have found a strong correlation between children's vocabulary at age three and their reading level in third grade.⁴ Parents and caregivers are key players in developing this early literacy. Pre-schoolers whose parents regularly read to them, tell stories, sing songs, and engage in other literacy activities become better readers and perform better in school.

Early literacy activities are even more important for children from lower-income families, who hear roughly 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers.⁵ The average vocabulary of a low-income three-year-old is roughly half

Human Brain Development Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



Source: Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child. (2007). “The Science of Early Childhood Development”: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-ecc>

that of her higher-income peer (500 words, compared to 1,100 words).⁶ The difference in both the number of words and the quality of conversation heard by low-income children as compared to children in higher-income households is often referred to as the “word gap.”

In Arkansas, 47 percent of parents or family members read to their child each day, and 58 percent tell stories and sing to their children aged birth to five.⁷ Arkansas’s numbers are on par with the national averages of 48 percent and 59 percent, respectively. However, many more of our children can benefit from reading, singing, and story times.

Many organizations and early childhood centers around the country have begun to address the need for increased “word nutrition” for our youngest learners, such as the “Talk With Me Baby” project in Georgia.⁸ Thanks to the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Arkansas families now have a wealth of resources to help them guide their children’s early learning during this most critical stage of development.

AR-GLR’S “TALK, READ, SING” CAMPAIGN

The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (AR-GLR) has launched the “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” campaign to encourage parents to read, talk, and sing with their young children and to give them the tools to do so.⁹ The value is obvious. When 29 percent of our children from birth through age five live in families that earn \$23,850 or less in income each year and when campaigns in other cities and states have shown promise and progress, it’s time for Arkansas to invest.

TALKING IS TEACHING

The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and AETN are piloting Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing in Eudora and Little Rock during the 2016-2017 school year. Through Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing trusted messengers, like pre-school teachers, child care providers, home visitors, and WIC nutritionists share information with parents and caregivers about the critical role they play in their child’s early brain development. Each family receives a tote bag, a magnet, and either a bib or placemat, depending on the age of the child. Each item has messages with colorful graphics giving parents suggestions of conversation topics or activities in which they can engage with their child such as, “What color is your fruit?” or “How many halves make a whole sandwich?”



Parents in these communities can sign up for free subscriptions to ReadyRosie. In Eudora, parents can also sign up for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, which delivers free books to their child each month. And in Little Rock, the campaign helps connect parents with local Reach Out and Read programs and public libraries. Each family also receives a free book in their tote bag.

Talking is Teaching also aims to transform everyday places where families spend time together into language-rich environments. A community-wide multimedia campaign, including billboards, bus signs and an AETN public service announcement, will reinforce these messages.

Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing is a project of Too Small to Fail, a national, joint initiative of The Opportunity Institute and the Clinton Foundation.

READYROSIE



READYROSIE

ReadyRosie is a robust collection of two-minute videos in both English and Spanish delivered weekly via e-mail or text. They can be viewed on computers, smart phones, tablets, etc.). The process takes just minutes a day – parents or caregivers watch a quick video and then do the

interactive activity with their children. It's fun, fast, and educational for everyone.

Created by a team of math, reading, early childhood, and bilingual education experts, ReadyRosie now has over 500 videos of real families modeling literacy and math conversations in homes, parks, grocery stores, and other locations where families spend time. The videos use real

moms and dads in real places and provide parents with a tool for engaging in early math and literacy conversations with their kids. These conversations are the bedrock of the campaign.

Researchers from Penn State University are currently evaluating ReadyRosie, and the initial results are very promising. A sample of families were videotaped interacting with their child before and after receiving ReadyRosie every day for three weeks. Researchers analyzed the change in both the quality and quantity of language and found the following results for the children (items 1-3) as well as for parent interactions with their children (items 4 and 5):¹⁰

CHILD-PARENT LITERACY IMPACT AFTER READY ROSIE



RESOURCES

Resources for parents, educators, policymakers in English and Spanish (as available) are provided below and linked on AR-GLR's website at <http://www.ar-GLR.net/talk>.

RESOURCES BY AGE

<http://talkingisteaching.org/resources>

EARLY LEARNING STRATEGIES

“Developmental Milestones for Language Development” (Too Small to Fail):

<http://toosmall.org/community/body/Word-Gap-Candy-Land-Chart.pdf>

En Español: <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/talk-read-sing/never-too-early-es.pdf>

“Talking is Teaching” Parent Guide (Sesame Street):

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/talking>

En Español: <http://www.sesamestreet.org/node/1228?language=es>

“Words Are Here, There, and Everywhere” (Sesame Street):

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/words>

En Español: <http://www.sesamestreet.org/node/1230?language=es>

“Happy, Healthy, Ready for School” (Sesame Street):

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/happyhealthy>

En Español: <http://www.sesamestreet.org/node/1244?language=es>



“Shining Stars: Preschoolers Get Ready to Read” (National Institute for Literacy):

https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/documents/Shining_Stars_Preschool.pdf

“Tips for Infant & Toddler Teachers and Caregivers” (Too Small to Fail):

<http://toosmall.org/community/body/Tips-for-Infant-Toddler-Teachers.pdf>

En Español: <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/talk-read-sing/infant-toddler-es.pdf>

“Make the Most of Playtime” (The Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning-Vanderbilt University):

http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/make_the_most_of_playtime2.pdf

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

“Interactive Baby Brain Map” (Zero to Three):

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/baby-brain-map.html>

“Frequently Asked Questions on the Brain” (Zero to Three):

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/faqs-on-the-brain.html>

“Behavior & Development Resources” (Zero to Three): <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development>

“Ages & Stages” (American Academy of Pediatrics): <https://www.healthychildren.org/english/ages-stages/pages/default.aspx>

“A to Z Health & Human Development” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development):

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/Pages/index.aspx>

Family Tools (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Literacy):

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

En Español: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/familia.html>

“Developmental Monitoring and Screening” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/screening.html>

En Español: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/childdevelopment/screening.html>

“Learn the Signs. Act Early.” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>

En Español: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/actearly/index.html>

ABOUT THE TALK CAMPAIGN'S PARTNERS

ARKANSAS CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING (AR-GLR)

The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (AR-GLR) was launched in 2011 by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) to move the needle on education outcomes in Arkansas by focusing on third grade reading proficiency. AR-GLR is managed in partnership with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, the Arkansas Community Foundation, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. AR-GLR is part of a growing movement led by the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading that includes more than 240 communities in 42 states. AR-GLR is a collaborative effort of more than 25 organizations that believe the only way to advance grade-level reading is to work collectively and in partnership with families, educators, policymakers, and business leaders around the state.

ARKANSAS ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (AACF)

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families' (AACF) mission is to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities they need to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential. AACF leads the policy, advocacy, and research components of AR-GLR. AACF has focused on ensuring adequate funding for the state-funded preschool program, advocating for more summer and after-school programs, and ensuring that children with dyslexia and other reading challenges get the help they need.

ARKANSAS EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION NETWORK (AETN)

The Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) is Arkansas's statewide public television network that enhances lives by providing lifelong learning opportunities for people from all walks of life. AETN delivers local, award-winning productions and classic, trusted PBS programs aimed at sharing Arkansas and the world with viewers. AETN depends on the generosity of Arkansans and the State of Arkansas to continue offering quality programming. For more information, visit aetn.org, or follow the AETN blog at aetn.org/engage. AETN is broadcast on KETS (Little Rock), KEMV (Mountain View), KETG (Arkadelphia), KAFT (Fayetteville), KTEJ (Jonesboro), and KETZ (El Dorado).

TOO SMALL TO FAIL

Too Small to Fail, a joint initiative of the Clinton Foundation and The Opportunity Institute, is leading a public awareness and action campaign to promote the importance of early brain and language development and to empower parents with tools to talk, read, and sing with their young children from birth. Today, almost 60 percent of children in the United States start kindergarten unprepared, lagging their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills. Through partnerships with pediatricians, hospitals, faith-based leaders, community-based organizations, businesses, entertainment industry leaders, and others, Too Small to Fail is meeting parents where they are to help them prepare their children for success in school and beyond. Whether at the pediatrician's office or on the playground, Too Small to Fail aims to make small moments big by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions anytime, anywhere.

NOTES

¹ Dr. James D. Heckman. “The Heckman Equation.” University of Chicago: <http://www.heckmanequation.org>

² Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Brain Development*. New York: Families and Work Institute: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED418770>

³ Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child: “Brain Architecture.”: http://developingchild.harvard.edu/key_concepts/brain_architecture

⁴ Shrier, C. (2014). “Kindergarten Readiness: Language and Literacy.” Corunna, MI: Michigan State University Extension: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/kindergarten_readiness_language_and_literacy

⁵ Hart, B., & Risley, T.R. (2003). “The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3.” *American Educator*: <http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>

⁶ Hart, B., & Risley, T.R. (2003). “Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children.” Boston, MA: Early Education for All: http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/doc_research/05_MeaningfulDifferences.pdf

⁷ Zero to Three. (2015). “Arkansas State Baby Facts.” Washington, DC:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1132-arkansas-state-baby-facts#downloads>

⁸ Deruy, E. (2015, September 7). “Why Boosting Poor Children’s Vocabulary is Important for Public Health.” *The Atlantic*: <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/georgias-plan-to-close-the-30-million-word-gap-for-kids/403903>

⁹ Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, *Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing*: <http://www.ar-qlr.net/talk>

¹⁰ ReadyRosie. “Research.”: <https://readyrosie.com/#what>. Penn State’s final report is expected to be released later this year.

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