

Why Literacy Matters

Reading is not a natural act. While reading must be taught, the foundation for reading begins being built at birth, as a baby hears loving words from their mother in the womb. From there, the journey to language becomes intertwined with the pathway to reading – which is the foundation for living the life of our own choosing.



FEEL: With stories, we cross over into characters and develop empathy, improve decision making and ability to process emotions, and we learn how to self-reflect.



THINK: Through deep relationships, we fully engage our brains. Language promotes growth from infancy and through it we develop imagination, knowledge and wisdom.



THRIVE: Those who cannot read face poor health outcomes. Literacy enables us to live longer. It allows us to read prescriptions, understand instructions, select recipes, and take in general information about our health.



We read to become who we are meant to be.



PROVIDE: Literacy opens us to economic opportunity. We can read job descriptions, apply for and secure jobs with living wages and participate in economic decisions.



ENGAGE: A literate community contributes to its growth, acts as informed citizens and works to protect the needs of the community and its members.

Every person deserves the power to seek and pursue opportunities, to become their best self, and to make the most difference in the lives of others.



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TALK With Me Baby!



Tune in

Enter the baby's world

- Notice what baby is looking at or doing
- Comment on what you noticed
- Wait for the baby's response

Ask questions

Invite baby to participate and model turn-taking

- Ask a question related to what you noticed and commented on
- Wait for the baby's response
- Answer for the baby based on their response

Lift language

Model language

- Narrate everything you or the baby is doing, seeing, hearing or feeling
- Use interesting words and well-formed sentences
- Use qualities of serve-and-return conversations: parentese, loving tone, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and gentle touch

Keep it going

Carry on with the conversation

- Keep the focus on what the baby is interested in
- Continue to tune in, ask questions and lift language, taking turns over and over again

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Babies are born with a desire to communicate. From coos to cries, they are eager to connect. The more we respond, the more we bond and continue building on their foundational skills.

How Babies Communicate

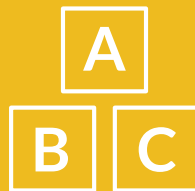


Birth – 3 months



- Reacts to loud sounds
- Coos and makes pleasure sounds
- Stops or starts sucking in response to sound
- Makes eye contact and looks at things in field of view
- Recognizes familiar voices and smiles or calms down when spoken to

4 – 6 months



- Follows sounds with eyes
- Reaches for things and people
- Vocalizes excitement and displeasure
- Looks towards caregiver when name is called
- Babbles in a speech-like way and uses many different sounds

7 months – 1 year



- Uses simple gestures
- Babbles using groups of sounds
- Turns to look towards direction of sounds
- Enjoys games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
- Begins to respond to requests and simple directions

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By talking with, listening to, singing with and playing with your child, you are forming the deep, loving connections that help to build their language skills – and build their brain for reading and all learning.

How Young Children Communicate

1 – 2 years old



- Saying more words every month
- Using some 1 – 2-word questions (“where’s kitty?” “go bye-bye?” “what’s that?”)
- Using many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words
- Putting 2 words together (e.g., “more cookie,” “no juice,” “mommy book”)

3 – 4 years old



- Talking about activities at school or at friends’ homes
- Usually talking easily without repeating syllables or words
- Using a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words

2 – 3 years old



- Having a word for almost everything
- Using 2-3 words to talk about and ask for things
- Often asking for or directing attention to objects by naming them

4 – 5 years old



- Using sentences that give lots of details (e.g., “I like to read my books.”)
- Communicating easily with other children and adults
- Using the same grammar as the rest of the family
- Telling stories that stay on topic



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Conversation Starters



Ever wonder what to say when you're trying to strike up a conversation with a baby and his/her caregivers? Try these conversation starters and talking strategies:

Conversation Starters for Baby

- “Hi, Baby! How are you feeling the morning?”
- “What a nice (bow, outfit, hat, etc.) you're wearing! Is that your favorite color?”
- “I see you smiling! Are you happy today?”
- “I hear you talking! Are you trying to tell us something?”

Conversation Starters with Parent/Caregiver

- “Have you heard that talking and reading with your baby a lot helps him/her be a better learner?”
- “Did you know that when you use a high-pitched voice, your baby really tunes in and it helps them to learn words?”
- “See how your baby responded when he heard my/your voice? That's his/her way of talking with us.”

What to talk with babies about

- Describe what you or the baby are doing, seeing, feeling, smelling, etc.
- Describe what is happening around you
- Tune in to what the baby/child is attending to/doing and talk with them about it

Strategies to keep in mind when talking with the baby

- Try to make eye contact/get at eye level with the baby
- Keep your interactions positive and upbeat – smile!
- Vary the pitch and tone of your voice
- Pause when the baby is initiating conversation with you
- Pause after you say something to wait for their response
- Use facial expressions and gestures to express emotions
- Use real words and complete sentences

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Benefits of Multilingualism



Cognitive

Multilinguals switch between language systems. This makes their brains very active and flexible.

Research shows that multilingualism facilitates:

- *understanding math concepts and solving word problems (Zelasko and Antunez, 2000);*
- *using logic (Bialystok and Majumder, as cited in Castro, Ayankoya & Kasprak, 2011);*
- *focusing, remembering, and making decisions (Bialystok, 2001);*
- *thinking about language (Castro et al., 2011);*
- *learning other languages (Jessner, 2008).*



Socioemotional

When children learn multiple languages, they learn multiple cultures. Multilingual children are able to maintain strong ties with their family, culture, and community.

Children can very effectively learn to navigate different cultures, the one at home and the one at school:

- *Multilingual children maintain their expressive ability in their home language which is critical to their bond with family (Wong Fillmore, 1991).*
- *Ties with family and culture are important in the development of children's identities (Zelasko and Antunez, 2000).*
- *Children raised in multilingual households appear to have better self-control (Kovacs and Mehler, 2009), and are very able to get along with others, both very important indicators of success in school.*



Learning & School Readiness

Mastery of the home language can be very beneficial for multi-language learners' school readiness.

Multilingual children benefit greatly when they have a solid foundation in their home language. Here are some benefits:

- *More flexible approaches to thinking through problems.*
- *Ability to think and read in different languages promotes higher levels of abstract thinking, which is very important for learning (Diaz, 1985).*
- *Multilinguals are better able to ignore irrelevant information, a benefit that may exist as early as 7 months of age (Kovacs and Mehler, 2009).*
- *Children who learn to read in their home language have a strong foundation to build upon when they learn a second language. The knowledge acquired in one language transfers to other languages (Páez and Rinaldi, 2006).*



Global & Economic

Over half of the world's adults speak at least two languages. In our growingly global society, speaking multiple languages is a very valuable skill:

- *Multilingual adults have more job opportunities around the world than monolingual adults (Zelasko and Antunez, 2000).*
- *Multilinguals develop in two or more cultural environments with multiple sets of cultural behaviors and ways of thinking and interacting. This provides them with more skills in adapting to different expectations (Genesee et al., 2004).*
- *Multilingual individuals can participate easily in the global community and have access to information from many more sources.*

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Benefits of Multilingualism

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Multilingual Words & Phrases for Casual Conversation



One way to show linguistically diverse families that communicating with them is important to you is to use simple words and phrases in their language during casual conversation. Use these translations to help them feel more comfortable talking with you.

English	Spanish	Amharic	French
Hello	Hola	Iwi selami newi	Bonjour
Goodbye	Adiós	Behina huni	Au revoir
My name is...	Mi nombre es....	Yenē simi...	Mon nom est...
What is your name?	Cómo te llamas?	Semeh/semesh man new?	Comment t'appelles-tu?
baby	bebé	hits'ani	de bébé
mother	Mamá/madre	inati	mère
father	Papá/padre	Ābati	père
family	familia	Bētesebi	famille
beautiful	hermosa/hermoso	k'onijo	belle/beau
handsome	guapa/guapo	melike melikami	belle/beau
cute	linda/lindo	k'onijo	mignonne/mignon
happy	feliz	desitenya	heureuse/heureux
yes	sí	āwo	oui
no	no	āyi	non
thank you	gracias	āmeseginalehu	merci
you're welcome	de nada	minimi āyidelemi	de rien
talk	hablar	mewirati	parlez
read	leer	ānibibi	lire
sing	cantar	zefeni	chanter
play	jugar	ch'ewata	jouer

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The Not-So-Secret Recipe for Supporting Families



Ingredients:

- Knowledge of the Science
- Mastery of Language Skills
- Coaching Approach

Directions:

Share: Share your knowledge of the science with families

Practice: Practice talking with babies and model behaviors for families

Collaborate: To adopt a coaching approach, work collaboratively with families, acknowledge their strengths and build upon them, recognize and respect diversity, draw on the families' hopes and dreams for their babies, and tailor your coaching to the individual needs and perspectives of each family

Combine: Combine all ingredients and sprinkle throughout your interactions with families

Coaching Approach:

- Partner with Families
- Use a Strength-based Perspective
- Recognize and Respect Diversity
- Connect Back to Families' Hopes and Dreams

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Lightning Coaching Moments



Your day is filled with opportunities to share the practices and principles of Talk With Me Baby with families. Lightning coaching moments are an easy way to coach families during your routine care.



Model a Language Skill:

Demonstrate how you do it

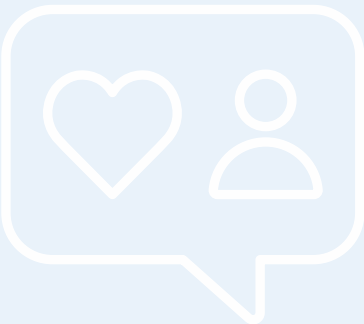
- Talk with babies directly in front of their families, demonstrating the actions you want them to take.
- Be responsive: tune in, use child-directed speech, gestures, touch, and facial expressions.
- Take turns, ask questions, use lots of language, narrate your actions and the child's actions.



Share an Educational Message:

Explain how to talk with babies and why it matters

- Reinforce key messages to help families understand the importance of talking with their baby.
- Mention how talking impacts brain development.
- Describe and explain how you talk with babies.
- Praise parents you see talking with their babies and call out the specific skill they are using.



Encourage Practice:

Use a strength-based approach

- Encourage parents and families to practice the skill with you.
- Point out their baby's response and how they're trying to communicate.
- Give lots of supportive feedback. Highlight the great things you see them doing and offer support.

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Key Messages to Share with Families



Families are their baby's first and best teachers.

Use these simple key messages in your Lightning Coaching Moments to empower families to talk with their babies early and often.

1

You have the power to help your baby become a better learner and a strong reader, even if you struggled in school or with reading.

2

Your baby's brain grows rapidly early in life. From the third trimester of pregnancy to 3 years old, your baby's brain grows to 80-85% of the size of the adult brain.

3

Even before your baby can talk, they have lots of ways to communicate. Eye contact, head turns, coos, body movements, and crying are some of the ways your baby tries to talk with you.

4

Back-and-forth conversations with lots of language nutrition strengthens your baby's brain, early language skills and relationships. It's as easy as T-A-L-K!

5

Research shows that it is impossible to spoil your baby. Responding to their cues helps them feel safe and lets them know they can count on you to fill their needs.

6

Talk, Read, Sing & Play with your baby early and often. Try to engage your baby in conversation at least 15 minutes every hour they're awake.

7

Language nutrition is good in any language, but best in the language you know best. Babies are perfectly capable of learning more than one language at a time.

8

Your baby will not learn language from watching television or interacting with electronic devices. When it comes to learning to talk, there is no substitute for conversations they have with you.

9

Anything can be a conversation. Comment on something they're doing, seeing, or feeling, share your favorite stories, tell them what you're doing, or use a book to start a conversation.

10

Practice. Practice. Practice. It may feel weird at first. The more you practice, the more natural it will feel and the easier it will be to notice your baby's cues.

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Take Home Messages



Congratulations on completing the Talk With Babies, Make a Difference course on Cox Campus. The take home messages below and the other course resources will help you become every baby's conversational partner and every family's coach. Visit Cox Campus for even more tips and strategies for talking with babies and coaching families.

1. Literacy is an important skill needed to ensure all children can reach and achieve their hopes and dreams.
2. When you talk with babies and coach families, you are an important part in making sure all babies leave your care on a path to literacy and self-determination.
3. Language Nutrition nourishes a baby's developing brain. All families have the capacity to provide rich language nutrition for their babies. It's free and always available.
4. Families who create loving, language-centered home environments help their children become better learners and readers.
5. Talking *with* babies is as easy as T-A-L-K!
 - Tune in
 - Ask Questions
 - Lift Language
 - Keep it Going
6. Babies love parentese! It grabs their attention, keeps them engaged, and helps them learn the sounds of their language.
7. Emphasize having quality over quantity. When adults have *quality* conversations with babies using the TALK strategy, babies will hear more than the recommended 2000 words/waking hour babies need every day.
8. Babies learn language through conversations with responsive adults, NOT from technology. Be sure to limit the use of technology with babies, including *your* use of technology.
9. Language nutrition is good in any language but best in the language you know best and babies can learn more than one language at a time.
10. Coaching families is as fast as lightning and can easily be included in the routine care you provide. Empower families to provide rich language nutrition with Lightning Coaching Moments:
 - Share educational messages about language nutrition
 - Model language skills for the families
 - Encourage families to practice and give them feedback

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