



Trusted Messenger Training

Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a public awareness and action campaign designed to encourage parents and caregivers to engage in language-rich interactions with their young children to boost their early brain and language development. Families are critical to supporting children’s early development but may not realize the powerful role they play and may have questions about how to engage with their child. The following messages offer fun and simple ways for parents and caregivers to use everyday moments to talk, read and sing together.

Your role as a trusted messenger.

Trusted messengers play a large and important role in Talking is Teaching communities. As a trusted messenger, you are in a unique position to share messages and model specific activities to help nurture parents’ relationships with their children. Let parents and caregivers know about the power of their words and interactions with their children. Your encouragement and support will go a long way! Remember, your role is not to dictate, but to listen to families and understand their experience to better support them.

Talking to families.

Here are some messages and tips to guide your discussions, along with any examples you can share from your own experiences.

- **Talk, read, and sing together every day from birth.** Let families know that talking, reading, and singing together every day from birth will boost their child’s early brain and language development. While you don’t have to explain all of the details of brain science research, let families know that something as simple as talking with their child about the colors, sounds, and smells around them can help build their vocabularies and prepare them for success in school and beyond.
- **Any moment can be a learning opportunity.** Let families know that every opportunity to talk, read and sing with their children is an opportunity to help them grow. You can do it while changing a diaper, giving a bath, or during mealtime. Every small moment together matters!
- **Encourage bilingualism.** Some of you may be working with Spanish-speaking families. Encourage families to talk, read, and sing in Spanish, or whatever language with which they are most comfortable! Children who learn more than one language may begin to speak later, but ultimately their brain will be more active and flexible. Picture walks, where caregivers and children look through the pictures in a book, are also great for speakers of other languages to become comfortable with reading to their child when there are no books available in their home language.
- **Every child develops at their own pace.** Just as we adults learn at our own pace, children do as well, and children may meet different stages of their development at varying times. Encourage families to meet their children where they are! If a caregiver expresses concern about their child’s development, you can encourage them to speak with their pediatrician.
- **Acknowledge families’ strengths.** Explore and recognize what families already do to support their children’s early development. Help families find activities that work best for them and their children. The families already have everything they need to be great parents - you are there to further support them with tips, tools, resources and encouragement.

Materials – a conversation starter.

Talking is Teaching materials, including books, tote bags, and other everyday objects are fun and useful tools that provide great opportunities to talk about early learning and development. Take a few minutes to go through the materials and discuss how families can incorporate talking, reading, and singing into their daily routines. Try to model some of these interactions for the parents with whom you are talking with. Remember, sharing authentically is one of the most important parts of being a trusted messenger! Share your own experiences and stories with the families with whom you are talking with.

Tote bag

- Life can be very stressful, and families might feel overwhelmed by everything they need to do. This tote bag can be a simple reminder that talking with your child during a busy day doesn't have to be complicated - it can be as simple as saying "Look at the dog on this bag! What is the dog dreaming of?"
- You can use this tote bag in a variety of ways! Use it during your errands, use it to store your child's favorite books, or use it as a diaper bag!

Books

- Reading, in whatever language you're most comfortable with, is an amazing way to bond with your baby and build his/her language skills. Point out the pictures, colors, and words in the books with your baby! Even if he/she can't respond to you yet, he/she will be making connections between words and their meanings.
- This book is a fun story about [_____]. As you read the story, ask your baby questions. "What color is the main character's dress? What colors are you wearing?"
- You don't have to read the words in the book for your child to develop early language skills. For a fun activity, have your child look through the pictures and make up a story based on the illustrations!

Placemat

- These posters can brighten up a room – you can decorate them in your home, but they're also filled with prompts on ways to talk, read, and sing together. You can use the prompts to have back-and-forth conversations with your little one, which will help build her brain!

Clothing

- Routines are very important to babies, and this placemat is a great way to incorporate talking into daily routines. During mealtime, place your child's food on top of the placemat. When you use the placemat, use the prompts to talk with your child! As your child eats lunch, ask "What does your food taste like? Is it sour? Sweet?"

Art supplies

- Drawing is a wonderful way for your child to explore his creativity and imagination, and it's also a great way to encourage language development. Ask your child, "Can you tell me why you chose these colors/shapes?" and "What were you feeling when you made this artwork?"

Indoor Activities Kit *(Note: You can find a free online copy here: <https://talkingisteaching.org/indoors>)*

- If you want to do a fun activity with your child, there are many ideas inside of this kit! My favorite activity is "Promote Positivity." You and your child write a kind message on a sheet of paper and tape it on your window, spreading kindness to people in your neighborhood!
- Every activity in the Indoor Activities kit has a "Let's Talk" section, which you can use to talk with your little one. For example, as you do the "Promote Positivity" activity, you can ask, "What pictures can we draw to make other people happy?"

