

TALKING IS TEACHING: TALK, READ, SING
COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN GUIDE



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TO FAIL**



WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN GUIDE FOR “TALKING IS TEACHING: TALK, READ, SING”

Welcome to the Community Campaign Guide for “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing”—a grassroots effort to boost child brain development and early learning. We developed this guide after hearing from many communities around the nation that were eager to embark on, or enhance, a local campaign to tackle the problem of the word gap.

We launched “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” in 2014, as part of *Too Small to Fail*, a joint initiative of the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation and Next Generation to improve the health and well-being of children, ages zero to five. We began by conducting pilot campaigns in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and in Oakland, California, to build and test this model for a community word gap campaign.

For many years, dedicated organizations such as ZERO TO THREE, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as academics, philanthropists and a few trailblazing states, have shown how significantly the first years of a child’s life affect long-term health and learning. More recently, researchers have established a clear connection between early brain development and the quality of a child’s interaction with a parent or caregiver. Today, thanks to decades of research about the “word gap,” we know that the words a parent speaks, reads, or sings with a child—beginning even before the child is born—can have a tangible impact on learning and later success, both in school and in life.

This campaign brings together community leaders, early childhood advocates, and businesses to leverage their resources and form strategic partnerships to improve children’s early development. Specifically, **Talking is Teaching mobilizes local medical professionals, religious leaders, child care providers and other partners to use well-baby visits, sermons, and other routine community activities as opportunities for inspiring parents to engage actively with their young children—talking, reading and singing—every day from birth.** Through these trusted messengers, Talking is Teaching imparts the science of early brain development, and conveys to parents the tremendous power they have, through simple actions, to expand their children’s lifelong capacity to learn.

Talking is Teaching is a unique campaign to build public awareness and change behavior. It rests on the idea that small acts can have a big impact. But before taking these small actions, parents and caregivers first have to believe that they have the power to make a real difference in their children’s lives from day one.

There’s evidence that organized drives to change behavior are most effective when they use “nudges” to remind people to make small changes in their daily routines that lead to larger changes. Kaiser Permanente launched a campaign called “Thrive,” in California, for example, under former chairman and CEO George Halvorson. That campaign emphasizes simple, everyday behaviors that can improve health. And its message is that setting small goals, like climbing stairs, rather than taking the elevator, can eventually become habitual, and improve health and well-being.

In the same way, we are aiming to reach out to parents and caregivers where they already are, and urge them to do more of what they may already be doing. Families, especially in low-income households, have an extraordinary balancing act juggling competing demands, and often holding multiple jobs. This campaign acknowledges those pressures, and demonstrates simple ways parents can interact and bond with their young children each day while going about regular activities, like cooking, changing or bathing a baby, or preparing a child for sleep.

This Campaign Guide is meant for a wide audience of community leaders—from city government officials, early childhood advocates and child care providers, to local hospitals and medical providers, faith-based entities, businesses, foundations and more. We believe it's necessary to have one lead agency or organization in a community spearheading the campaign, but also recognize that the most effective approach is one that is broad, inclusive and most importantly, collaborative. If your community already has a campaign like this in place, we hope this guide will help expand or enhance your existing effort.

There's no "one size fits all" approach to this campaign. Just as our Oakland and Tulsa partnerships have evolved to suit their communities and unique visions, your own town or city's population, culture, demographic profile and needs will dictate your local approach and priorities. This guide describes some of the promising practices and lessons we've learned so far in Oakland and Tulsa. It does not dictate strict rules or requirements, but emphasizes flexibility. Our interest is in helping you foster dialogue and collaboration. You can use this guide to design campaigns of varying levels of intensity, tailoring these elements according to the resources you have available. We also encourage you to check in regularly on toosmall.org and talkingisteaching.org, where we will have updated information and tools.

Early childhood experiences have a deep impact on the rest of a child's life. More broadly, America's future economic prosperity will ultimately be determined by the success of today's children. As you join us in helping prepare America's children to succeed in the 21st century—forging local coalitions and finding new, creative ways to deliver "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing"—we hope this Campaign Guide will serve you well.

We are truly grateful to you for joining this effort.



Patti Miller
Director, *Too Small to Fail*
Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation



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INTRODUCTION

A parent is a child's first teacher. From the moment a child looks into her parent's eyes, she begins interpreting that gaze, and looking for cues to the world around her. The words that a parent speaks to a child and the moments a parent spends bonding with him early on help him build better relationships, encourage his curiosity and inspire his independence.

There's evidence that the words a parent or caregiver speaks, reads or sings with a child—as well as the relationship that develops during this back-and-forth communication—contribute heavily to the child's vocabulary and early brain development. The fewer words children hear, the fewer words they learn, and the more likely they are to experience an achievement gap through the school years. This can have a lifelong impact on their overall health and well-being. But just as important, the more quality moments a child spends snuggling with a parent or caregiver, making each other laugh, or having conversations (even ones that don't involve real words!), the more robust his early brain growth and sense of security and attachment.

We have focused the goal of our public campaign on closing the “word gap,” recognizing that by improving opportunities for increased communication with children, parents can improve their children's early learning and overall well-being. But this campaign is about much more than just the number of words a child learns. In the first part of this guide, we explain the research behind the word gap, and why it is important for parents and caregivers to engage in back-and-forth communication with their children starting from birth. In subsequent chapters, we describe details about the “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” campaigns in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Oakland, California, and share lessons learned on messaging to parents, policymakers and the general public about these issues.

In promoting this campaign's expansion to other communities, we want to reflect two important principles. First, the “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” campaign considers an individual community's needs, and so, not all approaches described in this guide will work for all communities. We want to share with you what has worked for the communities that have already launched this campaign—and what hasn't. And we hope that you will take those aspects that are relevant and meaningful for you, and either adjust or leave the rest.

Second, the Talking is Teaching campaign has been intentionally integrated into existing, like-minded efforts in our pilot communities. We believe that the campaign will be most effective when connected with existing efforts to improve children's early learning and development. So this campaign is intended to enhance, not duplicate or diminish, similar initiatives in communities.

THIS CAMPAIGN GUIDE OUTLINES:

- The latest **research** on child brain development and word acquisition, which will help you make a strong case to your community about the need for this kind of campaign;
- **Ways to mobilize messengers** parents trust—such as **pediatricians** and religious leaders—to talk directly with families and caretakers about the importance of early brain development, and how parents can help build their babies' brains; and, to provide information and resources to promote daily parent-child engagement;
- **Ways to strategically deliver your messages** through print and broadcast media, social media networks, billboards, bus advertisements, grocery stores and other public venues; and,
- **Lessons we have learned** about how to plan, launch, implement and evaluate this kind of grassroots campaign.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING & USING THE RESEARCH: BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

“Many parents are not aware of how much the brain is developing, and that they have such a critical role in building their baby’s brain. So this campaign is filling in that knowledge gap, and empowering parents to use that information.”

– Ann O’Leary, Next Generation

At the heart of this campaign are simple but staggering facts.

- **Children in low-income households hear 30 million fewer words spoken to them by the age of four than children in high-income households.**

This groundbreaking finding by researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley, published in 1995,¹ is referred to as the “word gap.” The word gap affects a child’s development both immediately and in the long term. The fewer words an infant or toddler hears, the fewer words he or she learns.

Psychologist Anne Fernald of Stanford University and her team have shown that this vocabulary and language-processing gap is already evident in children as young as 18 months.² Additional research has shown that this word gap persists over time, and can contribute to an achievement gap later in life.

But this same research has also shown that early experiences shape the physical structure of a child’s brain, and don’t just impact the number of words a child acquires. Children who engage in more meaningful interactions with a parent or caregiver in a loving and nurturing environment not only learn more words, but also

develop better social, emotional and cognitive skills, which are critical to long-term health and well-being.

Hart and Risley’s original work emphasized the importance of quality interactions between parent and child, including tone, responsiveness to questions, and the use of parent affirmations (encouraging words) rather than prohibitions, as positive contributors to a child’s vocabulary development. More recently, psychologist Kathy Hirsh-Pasek of Temple University and others have confirmed these findings in their research, noting the critical nature of both the quantity of words and quality of interactions. Hirsh-Pasek’s research emphasized the importance of joint attention between parent, or caregiver, and child, shared rituals and routines, and fluid and connected conversations.

In other words, the more time a parent or caregiver spends telling a child a story and listening to the child babble in return; or singing a song together, and talking with the child afterwards about her response; or pointing out what they see together during a bus ride, the stronger that child’s emotional and cognitive development will be.³ A child whose parent or caretaker actively and creatively engages his mind, beginning at birth, is setting out with all the right tools to acquire words, and will be more ready to learn for years to come.

¹ Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* (Baltimore: Brookes Publishing, 1995).

² Anne Fernald and Virginia Marchman, “SES differences in language processing skill and vocabulary are evident at 18 months,” *Dev Sci.* 2013 Mar; 16(2): 234-248.

³ Douglas Quenqua, “Quality of Words, Not Quantity, is Crucial to Language Skills, Study Finds,” *New York Times*, October 16, 2014.

- **In the first three years of life, the basic structure of the brain is developing. Parents and caregivers can help build their babies' brains during this critical period so children have a strong foundation on which to grow and thrive.**

The first three years of life offer an important opportunity for parents and caregivers to maximize brain development.⁴ Three years is more than one thousand days. That's a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the way the brain's neural pathways grow and develop, if you can take small steps to tangibly improve the quality of each one of those days in a young child's life.

However, this doesn't mean that a child cannot continue to learn after the age of three; or that if a parent or caregiver hasn't fully engaged a child from birth, brain development is stunted. Mainly the research tells us that parents and caregivers can capitalize on the rapid growth of the brain at this stage—**between 700 and 1,000 neural connections develop per second, from birth**—to help their children build the foundation they will need later in life.

WHAT'S NEW IN RESEARCH ON THE WORD GAP:

For a closer look at the latest and most convincing evidence on early brain development, visit the following resources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Early Literacy Toolkit
- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
- ZERO TO THREE, Baby Brain Map
- The Heckman Equation

WHO'S WORKING TO CLOSE THE WORD GAP:

In addition to Tulsa and Oakland's Talking is Teaching campaigns, there are [many other communities across the nation](#) working to close the word gap. Here is a glimpse of some of the existing efforts:

- Providence Talks—Providence, RI
- Talk, Read, Play—Kansas City, MO
- Talk With Me Baby—Georgia
- Talk. Read. Sing.—California
- Thirty Million Words Initiative—Chicago, IL

“A lot of patients we see think it's not their place to teach their children—especially bilingual parents, who often think they *shouldn't* talk to their kids in their native language [for fear that they won't learn English]. We tell them how wonderful the immersion among languages is for the young brain, and that kids should feel secure, and happy, and hear as many words as possible from their families.”

– **Dr. Gena Lewis, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland**

⁴ We designed this campaign for families with children who are infants, toddlers and preschoolers, but it has relevance for older children, too. Also, we want to note that children learn language through relationships and in context with the world around them, so this campaign also seeks to highlight key concepts in early *numeracy* and *math acquisition*, to encourage families to incorporate math activities into their daily lives. When families explore math concepts with young children, they not only build important early math skills, but also boost children's vocabulary.

“Every adult should be empowered to have meaningful interactions with children during everyday moments. In Tulsa, we hope to support a community where every home is viewed as a preschool—an authentic learning environment where children are supported and nurtured.”

– Annie Koppel Van Hanken, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Tulsa

BEGINNING WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

There is no expert, partner, advisor or collaborator in this mission who is more important than the parent or caregiver.

Parents universally want their children to succeed. They want them to show up to school ready to learn. They want them to graduate from school. And they want them to gain the skills they need to do well in their adult lives. Parents and caregivers work hard to provide their children with the best possible future.

Our most basic aim is to be of value to them—to acknowledge and support them in what they are *already* doing, and to support, inform and encourage them, if they need help and resources.

This campaign also aims to highlight a parent’s unique value in a child’s development. Parents and caregivers do not always identify themselves as “teachers.” They are often reluctant to give themselves this kind of credit, and in some communities, may even shy away from this analogy altogether. But still, studies show they have tremendous impact on a child’s early learning.

Talking is Teaching makes current research accessible by translating it into direct, simple messages about brain development, so that parents can help their children show up to school ready to learn, and to thrive in life. The success of this campaign depends on the messages delivered to parents and caregivers, and on the actions they take as a result.

WHAT PARENTS HEAR MATTERS, TOO

As you craft specific messages for parents and caregivers, consider the words and themes that will be most effective. We developed the messages for “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” with input from early childhood experts, behavior campaign experts and parents. Using focus groups and surveys with parents and caregivers, we discovered some central principles that may be of value to you as you design a local campaign:

- Keep campaign message(s) to parents simple, and avoid citing too much research information. Research is useful to policymakers, but too much can be confusing or even discouraging to parents.
- Parents respond to messaging that encourages and empowers them to promote their children’s brain development.
- Parents and caregivers say they trust information from pediatricians, friends and relatives.
- Optimism and positive messages work best; find words that do not blame or stigmatize.
- A message of urgency and hope can be effective, but highlighting deficits in messages to parents—like the 30 million word gap—can be overwhelming, and even create a sense of despair.
- Many parents respond well to aspirational language about wanting children to pursue their dreams.
- Many parents say they want reminders and aids, such as text messages or signage in grocery stores, and they appreciate ideas about how to incorporate talking, reading and singing into their daily routines.
- Men surveyed were less likely to talk, read, and especially sing with children on a daily basis.
- Political figures are not considered the most credible messengers, unless they have demonstrated experience with children or education.



CHAPTER 2: DEFINING & REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE

“One of the interesting lessons we learned in focus groups with parents across the country is about whom they trust the most to communicate messages, and where they seek information about health, education, finances and other matters. Many parents said, “*Univision*.” So we invited *Univision* anchors to participate in the campaign, and produced PSAs showing them talking to their own children.”

– Patti Miller, The Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” aims to deliver messages about early brain development directly to parents and caregivers in order to effect behavior change. So, the **primary audiences** for this campaign are parents and caregivers, such as the grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors and licensed child care providers that care for children while parents are at work. Business and community leaders may be your **secondary audiences**, as many of these individuals will act as messengers or even funders in this campaign. Adapting your outreach and communications strategies for each audience will be important.

This campaign was conceived as an effort to narrow the word gap, targeting messages primarily to lower-income households. However, you may want to explore further how you define your primary audience of parents and caregivers.

Here are some questions that can help you pinpoint who should receive your message:

- What are the demographics of your community?
- Who are you most interested in reaching, and why?
- Where do they live?
- What language(s) do they speak?

For example, in Tulsa, the campaign has used zip codes to target audiences based on household income. The Tulsa campaign has likewise focused paid media, community touchpoints, and the distribution of materials in low-income communities within specific neighborhoods.

Even in the initial stages of your campaign, defining your audience and gathering this demographic information will dictate all sorts of decisions you will make later on, such as:

- Identifying “trusted messengers”;
- Translating handouts and other materials;
- Deciding where and how to engage parents and caretakers; and,
- Investing resources for PSAs, billboards and other paid media.

“In any community, customizing for your audience is key. So, if it’s feasible to do a focus group to assess where your parents are and what they already know, that will drastically affect the way you execute programming. Tulsa, for example, has a strong faith community, and that has a strong influence on the way parents behave. They care a great deal about what churches say about child-rearing.”

– Caleb Gayle, George Kaiser Family Foundation

FOCUS GROUPS

Together with our partners, we conducted focus groups to understand more fully what parents in various communities already know, or believe, about brain development, and the impact that small daily acts like talking, reading and singing could have on very young children. These focus groups yielded valuable insights in the initial stages of developing the Talking is Teaching campaign, especially about which messages parents find most compelling (see page 5). While it’s not realistic for every community to conduct focus group research, given the expense, it is helpful to have this kind of data if you have the resources to devote to it.

Oakland offers a good example of why it’s important to know your audience. The city of Oakland is one of the primary refugee settlement cities in the country with rich cultural diversity. As a result, the UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland serves a population that speaks many different languages.

“We are really focusing on making sure the campaign materials are as accessible as possible. We want people to talk, read and sing in their native languages. Our families speak English, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin or Cantonese, so we have some messaging in all these languages.”

–Dayna Long, MD, UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland

REACHING PARENTS WHERE THEY ALREADY ARE

Think about your community. Where you are most likely to encounter expectant parents, or parents and caregivers of very young children? Where can you find them during a typical day?

That is where—and how—you can most effectively deliver your message.

WHERE PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ARE = HOW YOU'LL DELIVER MESSAGE

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Visiting doctor/clinic, labor/delivery, lactation groups | Engage pediatricians, family practitioners, OB/GYNs, birthing hospitals |
| • At church | Engage churches, pastors, etc. |
| • In voluntary home-visiting programs | Engage community organizations running programs |
| • At child care centers or family-run child care | Engage child care facility directors |
| • At preschools | Engage preschools |
| • At WIC or other public assistance offices | Engage local government agencies |
| • Waiting for subway/bus | Design and distribute posters; seek donated ad space; engage local public transit agency |
| • Sitting in traffic | Design and buy billboards; radio spots |
| • At gas station | Do outreach to gas stations/convenience store owners |
| • Watching TV | Create PSAs; seek donated airtime. |
| • Shopping | Engage supermarkets, other retailers, mall operators |
| • At libraries/playgroups | Engage libraries |
| • At playgrounds | Engage local Departments of Parks and Recreation |
| • At home, in public housing | Engage local public housing authority about posting PSAs in lobbies |
| • In laundromats | Design and distribute posters |
| • On mobile phones | Connect with parent app/texting services (such as Text4Baby) |

CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFYING TRUSTED PARTNERS & MESSENGERS



Your grassroots campaign to promote early learning and literacy has already begun. Strange as this sounds, it may have started years ago!

That's because **the organizations and networks that will be most essential to you are likely already in place, operating at full steam.** Some may become partners, who will work hand-in-hand with you to get your campaign to move ahead quickly. Others may be trusted messengers who already have the ear of parents and caregivers, and can be helpful in delivering campaign messages. In some cases, individuals and organizations may act both as messengers and partners to your campaign.

As early as possible in your organizing, it is helpful to identify who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work:

- Who are the major players already working in early childhood development, early literacy, health, or with expertise about children under five years of age?
- Who is passionate about literacy and school-readiness?
- Who is best-equipped, and most trusted, to communicate with parents?
- Which local elected officials, assembly leaders, and agency heads care about these issues?
- Who has a strong network of contacts and a deep history in this area?
- Which local businesses are civic-minded and support children's issues?

- Who already funds early childhood development and health projects locally?
- Who are influential leaders who may not yet know about these issues but are open to ideas to improve opportunities for children?

There are several reasons why this kind of brainstorming is important. When you thoughtfully and respectfully engage like-minded, on-the-ground experts, they can become your biggest champions. Furthermore, some of these individuals and groups may be ones that parents and caregivers already trust, and so they can effectively help bring your message home. Also, by opening up a dialogue with local groups early on, you may avoid potential conflicts with others who may be engaged in similar efforts.

As you form your own coalition—or join one that already exists—consider the full range of **grassroots partners and messengers** available to you, including any type of venue frequented by parents with young children:

- Healthcare providers⁵
- Religious leaders and faith-based institutions
- Child care providers
- Home visiting programs
- Libraries
- Municipal agencies and social service providers
- County education offices and school districts
- Like-minded nonprofits

“I think it's really important to find someone in the world of pediatrics who can be a big proponent, and a conduit into the medical community—and to identify local AAP branches or county medical societies, and find out who is active and passionate about early literacy.”

– **Dr. Amy Emerson, Educare and Reach Out and Read, Tulsa**

⁵ It's especially valuable to work with medical providers who are already trained through the *Reach Out and Read* network to distribute books to families through their practice.

MEDICAL PROVIDERS AND HOSPITALS

Doctors and medical providers have been among the most valuable messengers to date in the Talking is Teaching campaign. Parents and caregivers have told us in focus groups that they trust people they already have relationships with, and who routinely provide them with advice. So it's not surprising that parents overwhelmingly look to doctors and nurses for counsel on early brain development.

Consequently, in Oakland, a core mission of Talking is Teaching has been to mobilize healthcare providers at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and Kaiser Permanente clinics to communicate with parents and caregivers about early learning. Campaign partners there are developing a model for how children's hospitals across the country can actively address the word gap as a health issue.

Both the Oakland and Tulsa partners are strategically targeting:

- Primary care pediatric clinics and providers
- Family practices
- Obstetricians and gynecologists
- Hospital labor and delivery
- Messaging and signage in hospitals and surrounding neighborhoods

The idea is to mobilize hospital providers to take a “full intervention” approach with families they counsel. Pediatricians⁶ and other medical staff are distributing toolkits⁷ and engaging parents and caregivers during well-child visits. The Oakland campaign is also doing an in-depth evaluation of how this messaging affects parent behavior. In addition, Oakland and Tulsa partners are placing posters in exam offices, waiting rooms and throughout hospitals and clinics, to remind parents and caregivers about the value of talking, reading and singing with their children every day.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS & FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

Members of the faith community have also been key messengers in the Talking is Teaching campaign—especially in Tulsa, given its strong faith-based history and culture. Churches are trusted community conduits, and by disseminating information through faith-based messengers, you can reach a wide audience effectively to promote parent-child interaction.

The Tulsa campaign is working closely with eight megachurches—each with thousands of members, many of whom are from very low-income homes—to promote early language development. Faith leaders there are incorporating messages into sermons about what it means to be an engaged adult in a young child's life. Churches are also sponsoring Family Engagement Nights, with dinner and evening activities for families. The goal of these events is to talk about brain development and to model behaviors for parents on how to talk, read and sing with their children.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Child care providers of all types—home-based, centers, public and private—have long been a trusted source of information for parents about child development. They often interact with children as much as parents themselves, and can be effective partners in reaching low-income, working families. One way to connect with a large group of subsidized child care providers is through local resource and referral agencies.

Tulsa partners have thought creatively about reaching parents who may not be accessing traditional or high quality care. Through [Tulsa Educare's *Beyond the Walls*](#) program, the campaign is reaching out to parents in low-income neighborhoods around the centers—some of whom are on Educare waiting lists—to sponsor family dinner nights and distribute campaign materials and other information on early literacy.

⁶ The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a policy statement that calls early literacy promotion from birth an “essential” component of pediatric primary care. The AAP has been an important national partner with Talking is Teaching, and its local chapter may be a valuable resource to you, too, as you undertake or enhance a campaign in your community.

⁷ You can read more about these early learning toolkits in Chapter 5: Distributing Toolkits & Training Messengers (page 15).

“There’s a social justice underpinning to the profession of pediatrics ... pediatricians chose to go into a field working with and caring for children, so they are already natural advocates, and this early learning work is an extension of that.”

– **Jamie Poslosky, American Academy of Pediatrics**

HOME VISITING PROGRAMS

Home visiting programs, often administered by local departments of public health, are ideal campaign partners, as they connect with first-time, usually low-income, high-risk mothers. Although the most prominent home visiting models do not explicitly deliver messages about the word gap, they often encourage new parents to be more responsive to their babies, and emphasize the importance of the early years for long-term development and well-being.

In Tulsa, the George Kaiser Family Foundation forged a partnership with home visiting providers to distribute Talking is Teaching toolkits during home visits. It’s worth considering partnerships with providers like these, as you may be able to incorporate early literacy training materials into their existing trainings.

LIBRARIES

Libraries have a strong track record of encouraging parent-child interaction, offering regular story times and infant “lap sits,” as well as chances to consult with local experts and pediatricians about child development. The American Library Association currently sponsors an initiative called, “Every Child Ready to Read: Talk, Sing, Read, Write, Play,” with a mission similar to “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing.”

Tulsa Educare and other local partners have teamed up with local libraries to participate in family reading nights, and provide information to parents and caregivers about how libraries can be more inviting to families with very young children. The Tulsa library also sponsors a bookmobile, delivering books to low-income neighborhoods.

MUNICIPAL AGENCIES AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS, INCLUDING WIC

Your town, city or county may also run public programs aimed at low-income families with young children that would provide excellent opportunities for partnership. Similarly, federal programs administered at the local level, such as the nutritional program, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), serve large numbers of families and, like home visiting programs, can incorporate campaign messages and materials into their regular meetings with clients.

Other local programs, such as those offered through parks and recreation departments, or aimed at teen parents, may be strong potential partners. Even municipal agencies serving families—such as a city department of public records that issues birth certificates, or a local water department that sends monthly bills—can be valuable partners, just by including campaign information in materials they mail to families.

COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Many county education departments and school districts throughout the country operate preschool programs, and a few of those offer child care for younger children and their families. Even when educational institutions serve older children, it’s worth the effort to try to engage them as partners. Some of these schools may reach the audience you’re seeking to communicate with, as they serve families with school-age children who also have younger siblings. Also, school districts today are becoming more and more invested in encouraging family involvement in a child’s education long before kindergarten.

LIKE-MINDED NONPROFITS

Other valuable networks for distributing information to parents and caregivers include community-based organizations that focus on young children, such as child care resource and referral agencies, children's museums, public health entities and those sponsoring activities such as play groups. Both the Tulsa and Oakland campaigns rely on these key partners.

The Tulsa campaign is partnering with local providers who do outreach through a postpartum intervention program called “[Never Shake a Baby](#),” in visits to parents in hospital Labor and Delivery departments.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

While local experts will vary considerably from one community to the next, there's a wide range of national organizations devoted to early learning and literacy. With local chapters across the country, these national networks are key potential partners for your local campaign.

Here are some established organizations with infrastructure in place that may be ripe for collaboration:

- [Reach Out and Read](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#); see also [AAP's literacy toolkit](#)
- [American Library Association](#), and its [state and regional chapters](#)

- [Raising a Reader](#), [First Book](#), or [Imagination Library](#)
- [The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)
- [Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors](#)
- [United Way](#)
- [Child Care Aware](#)
- [First 5 California](#)

One national partner that has been indispensable in reaching Hispanic parents and caregivers is the media company Univision. Hispanic children are one of the key target groups for the *Too Small to Fail* campaign for two important reasons. First, more than one-third of Hispanic children are growing up in poverty and in households with parents who don't have a high school diploma. Second, recent research shows that Hispanic parents talk, read and sing with their young children, ages birth to two, at rates lower than any other demographic group.

Univision is the primary source for news and entertainment among Hispanic communities. And with over 23 owned and operated stations, and 45 affiliate stations throughout the United States, it's a highly trusted community partner that viewers and listeners rely on for advice on many different topics, including parenting. Branded in Spanish as “*Pequeños y Valiosos*,” *Too Small to Fail* has established a strong national partnership with Univision that is a valuable asset to any community that wishes to engage a trusted media partner to distribute messages to Hispanic parents, and support local community events, such as book fairs.

OAKLAND'S COMMUNITY-WIDE STRATEGY

Too Small to Fail is also partnering with The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, the Bay Area Council, and First 5 Alameda to carry out a community-wide plan to engage families not served by UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. The effort builds on a pilot project initiated during the summer of 2014, with initial funding provided by Kaiser Permanente, in which the Bay Area Council organized the distribution of clothing and tote bags, and secured billboards throughout the Oakland community, before the publicized launch of Talking is Teaching in Oakland. Key community distribution points include community clinics and private pediatric practices with Reach Out and Read programs, birthing hospitals, home visiting programs, libraries, child care centers and home-based child care programs. In addition to these community touchpoints, Oakland's full community-wide strategy includes plans to activate the faith-based community.

THE FRESNO EFFORT

Early in 2015, Fresno, in California's Central Valley, became the first community to learn from our pilots in Tulsa and Oakland, and incorporate the campaign's messages and creative materials into their community. The Fresno effort, supported by Granville Homes, a local "green developer" with a strong standing in the community, has engaged a broad base of partners, with the local County Office of Education and several school districts at the forefront. The campaign leveraged a pre-existing birth-to-third grade effort, which had already engaged superintendents and principals on the importance of children's early learning.

Fresno has also partnered with the local District Attorney, who will be incorporating the campaign into efforts with teen parents; and the Housing Authority, which will run PSAs on monitors in housing development lobbies, and deliver "Talking is Teaching" workshops. The community has even engaged Fresno State University's Athletics Department to display campaign messages during school sporting events. Since Fresno's kick-off press conference in January 2015, organizers have released PSAs on local television, and posted campaign billboards and signs throughout the community.

HIGH-PROFILE MESSENGERS AND LEADERS

Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has been the campaign's national champion, and appeared in person to launch "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" in Tulsa and Oakland. She has played a vital role as a high-level convener, bringing nationally recognized individuals and organizations to the table and inspiring them to make tangible commitments to the campaign. Secretary Clinton has also brought in effective, high-profile partners, including former United States Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and businesswoman and philanthropist Cindy McCain, both of whom have long-standing commitments to health and children's rights, to ensure that the campaign—like the issue of early childhood—is non-partisan, and has as broad a reach as possible.

It's important to think about the champions in your community or region who can bring their leadership to bear to stimulate dialogue, draw public and media attention to the issue, and keep partners accountable for what they promise to contribute. A city's mayor is one possible choice for this purpose, but it's also worth considering a range of other high-profile individuals, local celebrities, sports figures and others who can

provide leadership for the campaign, or help you disseminate your message broadly and quickly.

In Tulsa, for example, businessman and philanthropist George Kaiser is not only funding the campaign through his family foundation, but also has been directly and deeply involved throughout the planning and implementation process.

In Oakland, Marc Benioff, the chairman and CEO of Salesforce.com, and his wife, Lynne, made a generous gift to fund the campaign. Dr. Bert Lubin, the president and CEO of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, Oakland, has devoted countless hours, empowered doctors and social workers on the hospital's staff to become involved, and has leveraged his own contacts throughout the local community to recruit additional partners.

Bernard Tyson, the CEO of Kaiser Permanente initiated a pilot of the campaign at four Bay Area Kaiser Permanente facilities. Depending on the outcome of the pilot, Tyson may bring the program to all of the 100,000 babies born each year at Kaiser Permanente hospitals nationwide.



CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING CORPORATE PARTNERS & FUNDERS

Corporate partners are vital to creating and implementing a campaign, and it's important to get them on board early. While it may feel intimidating to approach local businesses or national corporations for assistance with your campaign, they can be valuable and committed partners. To date, corporate partners across the country have provided campaign funding, in-kind contributions (such as books, advertising, volunteers, and logistical support), assistance with earned and social media outreach, and innovative thinking.

The Bay Area Council, a business-supported advocacy organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, mobilized Oakland's business community to help the local campaign through philanthropic support, as well as "thought leadership."

The Bay Area Council staff held multiple meetings with business and high-tech communities around Oakland to bring partners on board. They have also motivated local corporate partners by demonstrating the value of becoming involved in a campaign to shape parental interactions with young children. The organization's staff cited research to show that family-friendly investments by businesses can improve employee retention and reduce workforce turnover.

Local communities can also benefit by finding a corporate partner that may already be a champion of early learning. In Oakland, the Bay Area Council made a connection with the local head of Clear Channel, an outdoor advertising company, who volunteers in an Oakland school and is passionate about early childhood education. Clear Channel later donated billboard space for the Oakland campaign, among other valuable gifts.

The Bay Area Council also connected the campaign with the regional United Parcel Service (UPS) chapter, led by Rosemary Turner, a longtime supporter of early childhood causes. Working with the UPS Community Engagement Coordinator, the Talking is Teaching campaign received free shipping of campaign materials around Oakland, and countless hours of logistical support, including a full-day volunteer tote bag-stuffing drive.

More and more, large corporations support employee volunteer activities, which can be a great source of support for local campaigns. For example, Salesforce donated a high volume of volunteer hours to Talking is Teaching in Oakland, by assembling 3,500 tote bags at its Dreamforce conference and another volunteer event. It has also donated funding to support the assembly of an additional 1,500 tote bags at the company's conferences in Chicago, Washington, DC and Boston in 2015.

Your corporate partners need not be large businesses with national branches and thousands of employees, however. Local businesses—from corner stores to gymnasiums to laundromats (and anywhere else parents of young children spend time in your community)—can support your campaign by posting signs, distributing materials and even airing PSAs on closed circuit television.

Here are additional questions to consider when recruiting corporate partners:

- What would motivate a corporate partner?
- Is this an opportunity for them to enhance their bottom line, build (or rebuild) public relations, or expand on work they're already doing in the early childhood education arena?
- Do they already express a commitment to the community, or otherwise consider themselves a "good neighbor"?

CHAPTER 5: DISTRIBUTING TOOLKITS & TRAINING MESSENGERS



Once you have identified your partners, and you have a sense of what resources you'll have available, it's time to choose the actual elements of your campaign strategy.

Research on effective behavior change campaigns has found that long-lasting behavior change happens through clear messages that demonstrate easy steps people can take, delivered by messengers people trust.

While it's tempting to focus resources on public service announcements or paid media, we've found it's more effective to focus the bulk of your resources on hands-on messaging (for example, having medical providers and faith leaders counsel parents and caregivers, and distribute specially-designed early learning toolkits), and then to complement that with a broader public awareness campaign (billboards, media), to reinforce the themes you're already conveying to parents, one-on-one.

This section describes the strategies our Tulsa and Oakland partners are employing with each of these elements to deliver messages and tools to their target audiences.

A GLIMPSE AT THE TULSA & OAKLAND CAMPAIGNS

"Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" is already underway in both Tulsa and Oakland, and those cities provide two distinct models for how you might go about developing a message, engaging parents, recruiting partners, and pursuing a local campaign. Here's a look at those two communities and campaigns:

TULSA

The George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) in Tulsa has long been known for its leadership in early childhood education, through its heavy investment in Educare centers for low-income children from birth to age four.

"Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" provided an opportunity to expand the foundation's leadership in this area. GKFF offered both generous philanthropic support and a robust on-the-ground partnership to develop a campaign for Tulsa that could be used as a national model.

CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE:

- One funder, planner and implementer: George Kaiser Family Foundation, working with local partners (the anti-poverty agency CAP Tulsa, the strategic communications firm Saxum, the faith community, local businesses and others)
- Strong faith-based component
- Medical outreach
- Grocery store outreach

BACKGROUND/DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Revitalized southern/midwestern city
- Urban population: 400,000; metro area: 1 million
- Predominantly white (60%); more than 15% African-American; 14% Hispanic; remainder largely Native American and Asian-American
- 16% living in poverty (as of 2013 in Tulsa County)⁸

⁸ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

OAKLAND

A generous gift from Lynne and Marc Benioff drives the central piece of the Oakland campaign, which mobilizes healthcare providers at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland to deliver messaging and tools to parents and caregivers. The goal is to build a model program for how children’s hospitals across the country can actively address the word gap as a health issue.

Kaiser Permanente is also testing the model in Bay Area clinics. In addition to the hospital strategy, the Oakland campaign includes a community-wide strategy that involves the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, the Bay Area Council and First 5 Alameda. It also builds on a strong, local literacy effort—Oakland Reads 2020—led by the Rogers Family Foundation. The Oakland community-wide effort involves community-based clinics and pediatricians (many of whom are already Reach Out and Read providers), labor and delivery hospitals, home visiting programs, churches and other faith-based institutions, libraries and early childhood providers.

CAMPAIGN AT A GLANCE:

- Hospital-focused strategy, funded by Lynne and Marc Benioff and Kaiser Permanente, focused on UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland and Kaiser Permanente Oakland
- Community-wide strategy, funded by Rainin Family Foundation, First 5, the Bay Area Council, and other community/foundation partners⁹
- Local business engagement
- Partnership with creative advertising agency, Goodby Silverstein & Partners (GS&P), to design creative assets, which serve as prototype for campaigns nationally

BACKGROUND/DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Major West Coast port city
- Population: 400,000 (city alone)
- 34% White, 28% African American, 25% Hispanic, 6% Asian
- 20.5% living in poverty¹⁰

⁹ A unique feature of the Oakland campaign is that voters in the state of California passed an initiative in 1998 to invest in early development and health for children from birth to age five, using cigarette and tobacco tax revenues. That measure, Proposition 10, created a statewide entity called First 5 California, to educate parents and caregivers about the important role they play in their children’s early development. The measure also created First 5 commissions at the county level to support local early childhood health and development efforts. The local First 5 commission has provided Oakland with an existing infrastructure for undertaking this campaign.

¹⁰ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

DISTRIBUTING TOOLKITS TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

To help messengers launch a dialogue with parents about the word gap, Talking is Teaching created a toolkit to distribute in specially-designed campaign tote bags. To date, the Talking is Teaching campaign has distributed thousands of tote bags through our on-the-ground messengers. If you choose to use, or adapt, these toolkits for your community's campaign, it may help to know how it was developed.

The tote bags, and several items contained in them, were designed by Goodby Silverstein & Partners (GS&P). The Bay Area Council and our Oakland partners worked closely with GS&P to come up with a campaign concept and designs, and several early childhood experts informed the early decisions for proper messaging.

The team brainstormed about everyday objects parents encounter in the course of their daily routines—such as dressing a child in the morning, or giving her a bath—that could provide fun reminders to use that time to talk, read or even sing about what is happening. They created dozens of colorful “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” designs for several clothing and paid media items, that include clothing for infants and toddlers (see toolkit materials below), as well as billboards and bus shelter ads.

All of these [creative designs are available free](#) as prototypes for you, if you wish to print and distribute these materials to your own audience.

The Oakland campaign worked closely with a local apparel company, [Oaklandish](#), to produce the branded clothing, blankets and bath towels. The tote bags and clothing items then became part of a larger kit, assembled through generous donations by several corporate partners.

TALKING IS TEACHING TOOLKITS INCLUDE:

- A reusable tote bag, branded with the Talking is Teaching logo and quote
- Infant and toddler clothing (onesies and t-shirts), branded with the Talking is Teaching logo and messaging
- A branded blanket and/or bath towel
- Age-appropriate book(s), provided by Scholastic and *Highlights*
- Sesame Street tools:
 - “Talking is Teaching” Family Moments Resource Guide
 - “Word on the Street” cards
 - CD
- A postcard to sign up for Text4Baby (a free text message service for pregnant mothers or parents with infants under one year of age, that offers three free text messages per week with tips relating to a baby’s developmental stages).

Your community may decide not to use all of the materials in these toolkits. We do strongly encourage you to consider using as many as your resources will allow, however, as these materials provide exactly the kind of tools and reminders that parents say they appreciate having to prompt them to talk, read, and sing more with their children each day.

TRAINING MESSENGERS

Training partners to deliver messages to parents is another step that requires significant planning, organization and staff time. There's a lot that goes into explaining brain development and word acquisition to families, and the importance of parent interaction.

In Tulsa and Oakland, our partners held evening events or hosted lunches to train medical providers and faith leaders. At a lunch time training for medical residents in Oakland, for example, campaign organizers re-viewed the research on the word gap and early literacy, unveiled and described the toolkits, and prepared doctors to act as messengers with families. Similarly, Tulsa hosted an evening event, training medical providers to integrate Talking is Teaching into their clinic and office visits. That training included nearly 200 local physicians, together with a representative from the AAP, and members of the local health care agency.

Partners in both Tulsa and Oakland are prepping messengers using both PowerPoint presentations and a set of key talking points, [which you can also download and use in your community](#). Tulsa is working to expand existing "Read Out and Read" programs with medical providers. And in addition to the posters that both Tulsa and Oakland partners are providing for medical providers' offices, the Tulsa partners have also used specially-designed Rx pads that physicians can use to "prescribe" talking, reading and singing with children.

"You can't just give families a tote bag. Providers have to be trained and be passionate, and have talking points, and be careful about how they give these tools to families. The tote bag is a tool for talking about early literacy and attachment and a whole range of issues."

– Janis Burger, First 5 Alameda

CHAPTER 6: USING PAID & EARNED MEDIA



This campaign includes a range of traditional paid and earned media elements for raising public awareness, along with more recent approaches, such as social media. The paid public messaging elements are intended not to prompt parental behavior change alone, but rather, to reinforce messages the campaign is already delivering to parents and caretakers directly on the ground.

Examples of paid media efforts for both campaigns include:

BILLBOARDS

Finding corporate partners who can help defray the costs of paid media makes a big difference in conducting your paid media campaign. In Oakland, generous support from outdoor advertising company Clear Channel enabled partners to place dozens of billboards and eco-posters, using designs provided by Goodby Silverstein & Partners, in areas surrounding the UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland and Kaiser Permanente hospitals. Similarly, Tulsa worked with [Lamar Advertising](#), to place 21 billboards in target communities, and will be posting dozens more.

BUS SHELTER AND BUS/SHUTTLE ADVERTISEMENTS

With a generous donation of advertising space and installation costs from Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority, the Tulsa campaign is placing three different messages on city buses, as well as in city bus shelters. Similarly, the Oakland campaign is also placing ads on shuttles that run to and from public transit near the hospital.

POSTERS AND OTHER ITEMS

Both the Tulsa and Oakland campaigns contracted with local printing companies to produce posters to distribute throughout hospitals, medical offices, churches and libraries that promote talking, reading and singing.

RADIO SPOTS

The Tulsa campaign is airing radio PSAs on several local networks with diverse listenership, including stations that serve African-American and Hispanic audiences.

GROCERY STORES

The Tulsa partners are preparing to launch a collaboration with two small grocery store chains (in approximately 18 stores) that serve predominantly low-income, black and Hispanic families. The plan is to develop a range of creative materials—such as interactive branded signage throughout the stores (for example, “*Let’s Talk about Fruit,*”)—to stimulate conversation between adults and young children as they make their way through the grocery stores.

Tulsa plans to incorporate early math concepts into its grocery store strategy as well. Supermarkets provide an ideal venue for introducing early math concepts through activities like counting fruit, observing shapes, and discerning “big vs. small.”

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Technology crosses socioeconomic and cultural lines, and can serve to reinforce campaign messages and activities with parents. It can also be an effective lever for motivating action and changing behavior among parents.

TEXT4BABY

We chose to test [Text4baby](#) in the Oakland and Tulsa campaigns, among a number of other apps and technology services. It's a free, research-based tool, directed primarily at pregnant women and mothers with babies under the age of one year. It sends developmentally appropriate text messages three times a week, based on the baby's gestational or actual age.

As a result of a partnership facilitated by the Clinton Foundation through *Too Small to Fail*, Text4baby messages now include tips for moms to talk, read and sing with their babies, using links to Sesame Street videos that model this behavior. This is a new feature for all users, which supplements Text4baby's original messages focused primarily on health and safety. An additional fee for campaign organizers also enables Text4baby to "localize" these messages, providing parents with information about local service providers and events, including library story times, playgroups in local parks, and free or reduced cost tickets to local children's museums.

ENGAGING THE PRESS AND LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

Too Small to Fail has used a combination of approaches in its earned media strategy for the "Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" campaign, and engaging the press will no doubt be an important part of your strategy, too.

Our initial mission was to engage the national press with a "big picture" narrative about the word gap—explaining the problem the country faces on a national scale, the research on child brain development, and the importance of parent-child interaction to help close the word gap and improve early learning. We garnered hundreds of media stories in national and international media outlets, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *NPR*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *TIME*.

After drawing national attention to the issue, our goal now is to engage local media to highlight personal family stories, and the ways parents and caregivers are receiving important information and tools to help them improve their children's early learning. We have sought local press coverage of our launch/kickoff events to introduce the Talking is Teaching campaign. We have also described how the word gap affects communities, by drawing attention to local families interacting with the campaign and taking steps to improve their children's early learning.

Telling these personal stories can help you engage local partners. In Oakland, Bob Schmidt of Clear Channel read about the issue in the *Oakland Tribune*, and it prompted him to get involved. He later became a vital corporate partner. So earned media not only raises awareness of the issue and the campaign, but also brings important players to the table. It's essential to look for every opportunity—every media hook—to grab attention, get the press involved, and build interest and support for the campaign.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Talking is Teaching also takes advantage of a wide range of social media outlets for communicating with parents, funders and all of its local and national partners. [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) are our two main vehicles, but the campaign also has a presence on [Instagram](#) and [Pinterest](#), as well as a [Tumblr](#) page.

Social media is indispensable for conveying your message widely and expanding your audience. It's easy, inexpensive, and helps you connect with parents, caregivers, and other members of your local community, where they already are.

We've developed the following guidelines for conducting your campaign on social media, based on our experience:

- **Engage local partners**—Talking is Teaching uses social media to coordinate and cross-promote with local partners, and tap into their audiences. Here's the process we typically follow:
 - Prepare a message—keep it short and catchy;
 - Share message with partners;
 - Coordinate the timing of your posting to social media with partners' schedules;
 - Coordinate the hashtag (it's important to make sure everyone's using the same hashtag, so all of your messages will appear in one place); and,
 - Get your message out together (this helps you have the broadest possible impact).

Facebook and other social media platforms have tools that are designed to help businesses and organizations narrow their audience and target their social media advertising. Limiting your audience by location, age or other category can help you focus on one specific demographic group.

- **Providing value to your audience**—Social media audiences appreciate original content and tips on how to talk, read and sing with children every day. We have, for example, asked partners to work with us on Q & A's offering advice for parents, as well as blog posts that tell personal stories about families' experiences.
- **Creating buzz around local events**—When you launch a campaign locally, or hold events, you can use social media to generate interest and energy around those activities by live-tweeting at the event and posting photos or videos. For example, Oakland partners held a "baby shower" for over 2,000 families at a local children's park that generated great interest and coverage online.

Finally, in the interest of keeping track of your social media messaging, you can take advantage of [Storify](#) (a web-based tool to feature social media efforts or campaigns in a way that's easy and accessible, well-designed, and easy to share) and other applications to curate and assemble all of the messages in one place.





CHAPTER 7: SORTING OUT THE LOGISTICS

Perhaps the number one piece of advice our partners had for other communities building a campaign was: *logistics, logistics, logistics!*

If you decide to distribute Talking is Teaching toolkits and posters, it's important to **build in staff time and resources for planning and handling the logistics**. This is a challenging, yet critical, piece of the campaign.

PHYSICAL PACKAGING, STORAGE AND DELIVERY OF TOOLKITS

Even before you sharpen your message, sign agreements with your partners, order posters and clothing, or stuff items into thousands of tote bags, it is critical to focus on how you will handle the logistics. Whenever you're dealing with bulk items—in the thousands—you're talking about heavy boxes, and a large amount of storage space.

Some questions you'll want to ask early on include:

- Who is going to assemble the tote bags?
- Who is going to store them? At what cost?
- How are they physically going to be stored?
- What kind of boxes are the right size and weight to

hold thousands (or tens of thousands) of items of clothing, or books, or tote bags?

- Are they able to be stacked? How heavy/strong are the boxes?
- Who is going to deliver the boxes/toolkits to providers?

In Tulsa, the campaign solved many of these problems by hiring a company to assemble, store, process orders, and distribute the literacy toolkits. This local company fills the tote bags with toolkit items, stores them by the thousands and receives orders, on an ongoing basis, to deliver toolkits to local organizations when needed. This approach has the advantage of removing from the local partners the burden of managing complicated logistics, but it also requires a substantial financial investment.

In Oakland, partners took on these tasks themselves, and—as stated in the previous sections—it “took a village”!

Similarly, it's important to think about whose clearance you need at various steps, and to have leaders in the campaign who are in a position to make those things happen smoothly and quickly.

“A key set of questions to ask about logistics is how you plan to distribute toolkits – how many will fit in a box, how big the boxes are going to be, who's got enough storage capacity, and for how long? Also, how are you planning to keep track of what you've distributed? All of this can be hard, and even tedious, but it's really important to think through the logistics of distribution.”

– Susan True, Kenneth Rainin Foundation, Oakland

CHAPTER 8: ASSESSING THE COST



Your campaign's design and, ultimately, its success, will depend greatly on the resources and funding you have available, as well as the needs of your community. Some communities may engage in high-intensity campaigns that utilize paid media, including TV and radio ads; distribution of toolkits through community partners and trusted messengers; and community events with local press and special printed materials. A high-intensity campaign will require more resources than a low-intensity campaign, which may only use one or two campaign elements to deliver messages to parents and caregivers.

Because costs vary widely by region, time and leveraging opportunities, it's not practical to present a comprehensive budget for a community campaign to close the word gap. We do, however, cite costs for the high-quality toolkit materials below, so that you may factor this information into your campaign.

As noted earlier in the section on corporate partners, it helps to consider ways in which you can bring costs down by soliciting in-kind donations, or by getting corporate sponsors for materials, billboards or PSAs.

Here are a few other tips on how to keep costs down:

- Seek economies of scale, whenever possible
 - Look for deals (buy two radio spots and get third one free);
 - Print materials in bulk to bring down the numbers; and,
 - Opt for black & white printing on some materials, instead of color (such as tote bags).
- Consider alternatives
 - Choose only one of the three Sesame Street tools (Family Resource Guide, a CD and "Word on the Street" cards) if your budget is tight.
- Know where in the pipeline the costs are highest; clothing tends to be the most costly item in the tote bags¹¹
- Seek printer/clothing company discounts
- Create regional hubs for ordering in bulk with other campaigns in the area to jointly manage logistics and minimize costs

While toolkit materials can be costly, there are effective ways to lower the overall cost for local campaigns. Funders in local communities from both philanthropic and corporate sectors can help offset, or even fully fund, the cost of materials.

¹¹ Clothing costs reflect high-quality sourcing and production processes, with special attention to labor, environmental and child garment safety regulations. We strongly urge campaigns seeking to produce these materials for their own use to also observe these standards.

Here is a breakdown of toolkit item costs per unit, as produced for the Tulsa and Oakland campaigns (and based on current printing and production costs for 10,000 units). Note that per unit costs on certain items decrease when you order in bulk, so an additional way to lower costs is to establish partnerships with other entities in your general region that are also ordering materials so that together, you can order the largest—and therefore, least expensive—quantities.

- Tote bag \$3 - \$5
- Clothing, per unit \$5 - \$8
- Blanket or Towel \$7 - \$9
- Book \$2 - \$3
- Text4Baby Postcard \$0.20
- Sesame Street Family Resource Guide Varies¹²
- Sesame Street “Word on the Street” Cards Varies
- Sesame Street CD Varies

You can find more information about our production guidelines and how to order materials [here](#).



¹² Price points for the Sesame Street Talking is Teaching Family Guide and Word on the Street cards will vary based on the quantities ordered. For more information on how to order these materials, please visit <http://toosmall.org/community/resources/production-guidelines>.

CHAPTER 9: EVALUATING YOUR EFFORTS



“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing”, is intended to become a data-driven model. In other words, we need to know if what we’re doing is working. To do that, we need to generate evidence by evaluating our efforts.

Evaluation is most effective if it’s part of the planning process at the beginning of the campaign, and if it seeks to answer questions during, or at the end of, an implementation period. Even the act of generating these questions will help define your overall campaign strategy.

Following are some questions to begin with, along with answers based on our experiences in Oakland and Tulsa:

- **What are your goals for the campaign?**

In the long term, we want to boost early brain development and language acquisition in very young children, so they will be ready for school, and can succeed in school and in life. But gathering that data and conducting a subsequent analysis would take a significant amount of time; we’d want to see academic and life outcomes in school, and beyond. In the shorter term, we are hoping that parents will talk, read and sing more with their children starting at birth, in meaningful, regular interactions.

- **What do you want to learn and what questions do you want to answer?**

Ultimately, we want to learn whether this kind of public-health approach to early language development improves brain development and language acquisition among very young children, and as they grow older. But in the shorter term—which will give us information more immediately—the question is whether, and how, the approach can change parental behavior, improving the quality of interactions between parents and their children between birth and the age of five.

- **What data do you need to answer your questions?**

Basic data is helpful, such as:

- The parents’ level of knowledge about the importance of early brain development—including talking, reading and singing with their children from birth—before they receive any campaign messages or materials.
- Demographic information about, and number of, parents who receive messages, information and materials.
- The amount of time parents spend talking, reading, singing with their children before receiving campaign materials and being exposed to messages.
- Initial impressions from parents after receiving the messages and materials.
- Follow up reports on whether parents engaged in more language-rich interactions with their young children: What particular messages or tools motivated action the most? The least?

We also want more specific information, such as parents’ impressions about effective messengers; and, whether on-the-ground interventions are supported by paid media messages (bus shelter ads, TV or radio ads, print newspaper articles, billboards, etc.).

Finally, we want to know how the process of implementing the campaign worked. For example, we want to identify any bottlenecks or successes in planning for and conducting implementation, and obtain feedback from messengers about their experiences.

- **How will you collect data and how frequently?**

All of our partners and trusted messengers are collecting basic data and relaying it back to us. At this point, each site is using a different approach to data collection and evaluation.

In Tulsa, the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) has established a system where family coordinators in churches regularly log into a password-protected portal to report information on the number of children and families they serve at each event, and the number of materials they distribute. Family coordinators also use this portal to request new batches of materials. This way, GKFF has accurate data about the numbers of families reached.

In Oakland, where the Phillip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies at the University of California, San Francisco is conducting a formal evaluation, staff are collecting data through surveys immediately before and after doctor visits, and at the four to six month follow-up visit. Researchers are recording data in a computer system they'll use to conduct the analysis.

The Oakland evaluation includes three components:

- Documenting what took place during the implementation of the campaign at the clinic;
- Identifying what worked/did not work in implementation; and
- Measuring increased knowledge, impact on behavior change.

- **How will the data be used?**

We'll use the data focused on the *process* of the campaign implementation to inform our work, making course corrections and adjustments along the way.

In Oakland, for example, parents were concerned that there might be a hidden cost to signing up for Text4baby. So, together with Text4baby and hospital staff, we developed a document explaining that there is no charge to most users at any point during the service. The Tulsa partners reported similar concerns from parents, and shared that family engagement coordinators in participating churches have signed up for Text4baby themselves so that they can reassure families about the free service.

We're also heavily relying on the data that looks at *outcomes*. If we learn that specific tools or messages resonated more deeply with parents and led them to take action, we will likely emphasize those tools and messages over others. For example, if we learn that hospital visits prompted parents to talk, read and sing more with their children, we'll move towards scaling through hospitals.

We will also use the findings on outcomes as evidence to funders of whether the program is effective. This will help determine future investments in the campaign.

Finally, evaluation findings will be essential to additional scaling efforts—deciding whether the best strategy is hospital-based, faith-based, or whether to deploy messengers in other settings.

Regardless of the strategy you choose locally, we believe it's extremely valuable to incorporate evaluation into your campaign, so that you have feedback for yourself and your funders on what's working, and what needs improvement.

FINAL WORDS



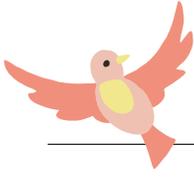
The “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” campaign is designed to magnify attention and motivate action. Based on decades of scientific research and study, this campaign aims to persuade community and business leaders, as well as parents and caregivers, to understand the importance of and take action to improve their children’s early brain development. But as numerous issue-based campaigns have taught us through the years, it is not enough to simply push out information—no matter how important or life-changing. In order to effect behavior change, target audiences must hear these messages from trusted sources, and have the appropriate tools and resources at their disposal to put a campaign’s messages into action. Additionally, a hearty communications effort through paid, social and earned media ensures that a campaign’s messages saturate the environment in which people work, play and live for maximum reach.

Talking is Teaching has been designed with these core principles in mind, and with carefully designed materials produced by early childhood experts and researchers. Even so, we don’t pretend to have all the answers on how to motivate action among parents and caregivers. We can only share what we and our partners have learned, and hope that these lessons help you in your own efforts.

As you consider the campaign you want to build, we hope that this Campaign Guide and the resources we have made available to you will serve as aids that can be integrated into similar efforts and spark new thinking. Your community may ultimately decide that the campaign’s materials don’t fit your needs, but then we hope you will find other resources and materials that do. In any scenario, the implementation of a ground campaign that combines trusted messengers, robust and energetic media efforts, as well as community-wide participation is sure to yield results and make change happen.

You are likely undertaking this campaign because you want to help improve the lives of children in your community from birth. At the end of the day, we all do the work we do because we want to ensure that the next generation is better than the last, and that our nation’s children enjoy brighter, more rewarding lives. To this end, we hope you will share your lessons with us and with other communities, and help us learn how to be most effective in this work. Evaluation of your efforts is invaluable in establishing a record of effective campaigns to improve early learning and positive outcomes later.

Finally, we will continue to share our lessons learned with other communities who are interested in this work. To find related resources, new research and other materials, check back often on our website, www.toosmall.org.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Community Campaign Guide has been developed with the gracious assistance of our many partners in Tulsa, Oakland, and across the country, who took part in interviews and collaborated closely with Next Generation.

We want to acknowledge the generous contributions of time and input by: Patti Miller and Jane Park Woo of the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation; Annie Koppel Van Hanken and Caleb Gayle of the George Kaiser Family Foundation; Houda Elyazgi of Saxum Communications; Dr. Amy Emerson of Tulsa Educare; Bert Lubin, Dr. Dayna Long, Dr. Gena Lewis, Mindy Benson and Susan Greenwald of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland; Matt Regan of the Bay Area Council; Susan True of the Rainin Foundation; Janis Burger of First 5 Alameda County; Michael Crain, Graham North and John-James Richardson of Goodby Silverstein & Partners; Jamie Poslosky and Mark Del Monte of the American Academy of Pediatrics; and Dana Hughes of the UCSF Phillip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies.

At Next Generation, our contributors included: Ann O'Leary, Senior Vice President; Kara Dukakis, Director of Too Small to Fail; Anastasia Ordonez, Communications Director, Children & Families Program; Neda Habibi, Online Community Manager; and, Anne Hawke, our writing and editorial consultant.



