

# Center for Children and Families

## 2015 Spring Lecture Series

### “Ensuring Children’s Success in School”

January 23, 2015

#### Supporting School Readiness by Building a Communication Foundation

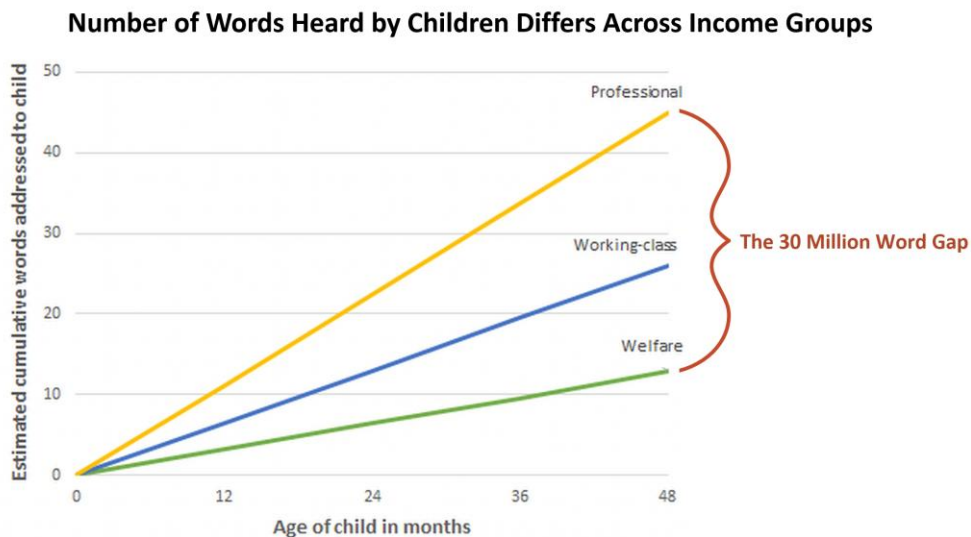
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**A national discussion: How can we bridge socioeconomic disparities in school readiness and help ensure that all children succeed in school?**

- Widespread concern and a push for intervention are focused on the early and persistent gap in children’s vocabulary associated with family income and the deficits in school readiness and achievement related to this gap.

The **Word Gap** refers to SES-related deficits in language input received by children and associated deficits in children’s word knowledge.



Hart & Risley, 1995

Children’s language ability powerfully predicts their school success, and the Word Gap may be a leading cause of the large percentage of children who are not kindergarten ready when they begin school.

- Good language skills are needed for both social and cognitive school readiness.

## How do we bridge the gap? How do we nurture successful language learning?

- Children learn best from real-life interactions with the adults in their lives.
- Children's communication skills that develop through these interactions are foundational for school success.

### The path towards language begins well before the first word.

### Strong language skills result from more than language input (the number of words the child hears).

- Strong language skills depend on babies building close, nurturing relationships with trusted adults and engagement in a reciprocal, collaborative process.
- Such relationships encourage children to want to keep *connecting and communicating*.

### Qualities of parent-toddler interactions that build a foundation of communication predict language success. These qualities include:

- Joint engagement (parent/caregiver and child) with symbols and objects
- Shared routines and rituals
- Fluid and connected conversations
  - Both verbal and nonverbal exchanges
  - A balance between parent and child
  - Not just feeding the child language

### What matters for children's language development is connecting and communicating:

- Tuning in to children
- Reading and responding sensitively to children's cues—both verbal and non-verbal
- Engaging in reciprocal back-and-forth play and interaction
- Incorporating lots of rich language into everyday moments.

### Resources & References:

Lauren Adamson, et al. From Interactions to Conversations: The Development of Joint Engagement During Early Childhood. *Child Development*, 2014, 85, 941-955.

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Infant, Toddler, & Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines and Early Learning Pathways of the Texas Early Learning Council <http://www.earlylearningtexas.org/itelg.aspx> (pp. 49-59)

Ellen Galinsky, *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs*. (Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2010). Chapter 3, Skill Three: Communicating.

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<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/12/talking-cure>

Catherine Tamis-LeMonda et al. Parents' Role in Infants' Language Development and Emergent Literacy. In *Wellbeing in Children and Families*, Edited by Susan Landry & Cary Cooper. (Wiley, 2014).

Vroom <http://joinvroom.org/tools-and-activities>