Learning to Talk: from Babbles to Words
- Language learning starts in the earliest months of life, well before the first word
- Somewhere around 18 months infants experience the “language explosion” and start to learn words much more rapidly
- Supporting early language development is important because early language is a harbinger of academic outcomes and long-term development

Inside the Black Box of Learning to Talk
- Early brain development is both rapid and dynamic
- By 24 months of age the infant brain is 83% the size of an adult brain
- Long before infants talk, their brain is functionally responsive to language the child hears

The Universal Ingredient to Language Learning: Caregiver Speech
- 30 years of scientific evidence indicates that quantity and quality of caregiver speech is positively associated with child language skills
- Caregivers can include parents, grandparents, day care staff, nannies, etc.
- Infants and toddlers who hear more speech from caregivers have better language skills
- On average, children from lower socioeconomic status homes tend to hear less caregiver speech when compared to children from higher socioeconomic status homes
- In our own research, we showed that caregiver speech was significantly associated with language skills in infants who went on to have autism

Recommendations for Parents
- Families are encouraged to follow the 5 steps to serve and return (see link below for more information)
- Step 1: Notice the serve
- Step 2: Return the serve by supporting and encouraging
- Step 3: Give it a name
- Step 4: Take turns…and wait. Keep the interaction going back and forth.
- Step 5: Practice endings and beginnings
- [https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/)

Links Mentioned During the Talk
- [https://labs.utdallas.edu/babybrainlab/information-for-families/](https://labs.utdallas.edu/babybrainlab/information-for-families/)
  - We are currently recruiting infants 0-6 months of age from the DFW area for a research study on early language development
- [https://www.ibis-network.org](https://www.ibis-network.org)
  - If you have a child with autism and are having another baby you may be eligible to participate in a new study
• https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/
• https://firstwordsproject.com/