

Appropriate training can create long-lasting changes in parent language habits. The LAUP “Take Time. Talk!” study examines the implementation and effects of three types of support of varying intensity for families to provide their children with literacy-building opportunities. Families receive supports such as a literacy tool developed by LAUP, called “Take Time. Talk!” about engaging children in meaningful conversations and support from Family Engagement Specialists. The current intervention will train low-SES parents to verbally engage with their children in specific, targeted ways. By supporting language-based social interaction between parents and children, this intervention will also address the goals of the Bridging The Word Gap Research Agenda.

Background



Existence of the Word Gap

- Low-SES parents tend to produce a lower quantity and quality of child-directed speech, as compared to high-SES parents. (Hart & Risley, 1995; Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013)
- Children who are exposed to more linguistic input acquire vocabulary faster. (Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991; Thom & Sandhofer, 2009)
- Conversational input is a strong predictor of children’s language outcomes. (e.g., Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, & Baumwell, 2001)
- Thus, children with more responsive, talkative parents are often advantaged in language development. (e.g., McCathren, Yoder, & Warren, 1995)

Effectiveness of Early Intervention

- Changes in parents’ language are associated with significant positive, long-lasting effects in children’s receptive and expressive language skills. (meta-analysis by Roberts & Kaiser, 2011)
- Low-SES parents often believe they have less control over the ways in which their children develop, as compared to high-SES parents. (Rowe, Suskind, & Hoff, 2013)
- Empowering these parents and informing them of the difference their words can create will be a key step toward achieving their cooperation in this intervention.

About LAUP

LAUP is a non-profit organization, funded in part by First 5 Los Angeles, that supports the development of high-quality early care and education sites across Los Angeles County. Our network includes over 500 centers and family child care homes that serve about 25,000 children and their families. Reflecting the population in LA County areas in need of our programs, 68% of our families are Latino, 8% are Multiracial, 8% are Asian, 7% are Caucasian, and 7% are African-American. Our field staff typically work with site directors (or other administrators), Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, and Teacher Aides. Lead Teachers (73%) have at least a bachelor’s degree and have taught for an average of 9.4 years.

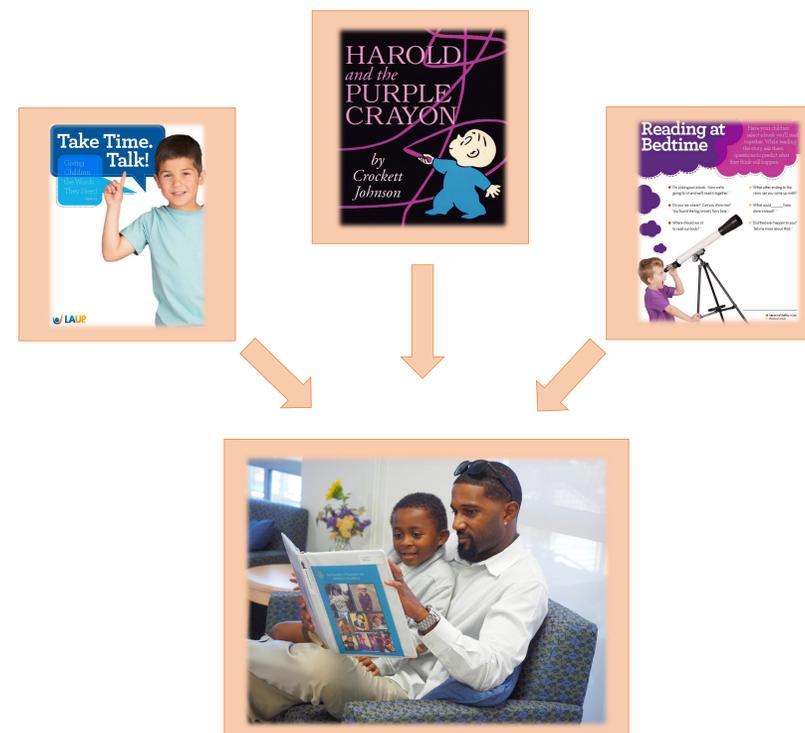
Research Questions

The research questions addressed by this study can be categorized into three primary areas of interest:

Effectiveness of Intervention Tiers: What are the effects of the intervention at Level 1, versus Level 2, versus Level 3? Is there a “minimum effective dosage” below which no effects are seen, or are stronger effects seen as the amount of intervention increases? Is there a “maximum effective dosage” above which additional intervention does not cause additional effects?

Effects of Child Age: What are the effects of the intervention levels on toddlers versus preschoolers? Do younger children show stronger effects at the same level of intervention? Alternatively, do older children show more growth due to their increased participatory ability?

Strength of Parent Outcomes: What are the effects of the intervention levels on parents’ usage of the tools, information, and coaching provided? What are the effects of the different levels on parents’ self-reported learning about child language development and on the ways in which they interact with their children? Do these effects vary by the age of the child?



Methods



Population

-Families in the LAUP network with two children: a child who attends LAUP preschool (3-5 yrs), and a younger sibling (1-3 yrs). -We will assign 10 families to each of three intervention tiers. Each family will contain one younger child and one older child. Total: 30 families and 60 children (30 younger, 30 older).

Pretest

- Younger children’s language development will be assessed on the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Developmental Inventory (MCDI; Fenson et al., 1993).
- Older children’s language development will be assessed on the Dynamic Indicators Of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Kaminski & Good, 1996).
- Parents will complete a self-report survey about their language and literacy habits in the home.

Intervention

- Tier 1: Participants receive a children’s book, a handout with tips for improving early literacy, and a list of additional resources.
- Tier 2: Participants receive Tier 1 materials, and an LAUP literacy tool called “Take Time. Talk!” This tool helps parents engage their children in conversations to build early language.
- Tier 3: Participants receive Tier 1 and 2 materials, and receive coaching in early language and literacy strategies on a monthly basis from LAUP staff trained in family interaction.

Posttest

- Children will be re-assessed on the MCDI and DIBELS, according to their age; parents will complete a self-report survey about their language and literacy habits in the home.

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