

## Abstract

Encouraging caregivers to talk, read, and play with their children in the first 3 years of life directly addresses the word gap through exposure to rich language experiences and indirectly by promoting healthy social and emotional relationships. Nurturing touch, like that which occurs as a parent models and reads to their child, is a key component of healthy attachment and fosters a safe environment for learning to take place.

Collaborating with the Urban Child Institute (UCI), a local non-profit agency focused on early childhood development, general pediatricians from the University of Tennessee (UT) Le Bonheur General Pediatrics plan to evaluate UCI's *Touch Talk Read Play* initiative. This message introduces families to simple ways adults can interact with their young children to promote language development, early literacy, social and emotional development, and kindergarten readiness.

A secondary aim is to evaluate if participation in more than one literacy enhancement program provides better results than participation in only one literacy enhancement program. The other literacy programs that will be evaluated for their additive effect are *Shelby County Books from Birth* and *Reach Out and Read*.

## Touch Talk Read Play Brochure



### TOUCH

Holding and cuddling your baby every day makes him feel safe and loved.

- 1 Gently hold your baby's hand or let your baby hold your finger.
- 2 Cradle your baby in your arms, look into your baby's eyes and smile.
- 3 Kiss your baby's forehead.
- 4 Respond sensitively to your baby's cry. This is how he knows he can trust you to be there for him.

 You can't spoil your baby.

### TALK

Your baby begins to learn sounds and words when she hears your voice.

- 1 Speak softly and gently to your baby – tell her you love her.
- 2 Sing a lullaby when you are putting your baby down to sleep.
- 3 Tell your baby what is happening like, "Now I'm going to change your diaper."
- 4 Repeat familiar terms like body parts during bath time.

 Speaking to your baby in at least 5-word sentences will help her learn more words.



### READ

Reading to your baby now will greatly improve his reading and writing later.

- 1 Read a favorite story to your baby at the same time each day.
- 2 If you don't like to read, just pick up any book or magazine and talk about the pictures.
- 3 Give your baby a few books that are safe to hold and explore.
- 4 Use a playful or sing-song voice when you read to your baby.

 Reading to your baby is a proven factor for kindergarten readiness.

### PLAY

Even simple games help build your baby's future problem-solving and creative thinking skills.

- 1 Play "peek-a-boo" with your baby.
- 2 Crawl on the floor and play "chase."
- 3 Dance to playful music together.
- 4 Give your baby a rattle or other baby toy that makes noise. Even pots and pans can be fun!

 Unstructured play improves your baby's attention span.

## Methods

We will conduct a mixed method study, using quantitative [Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)] and qualitative [(Literacy Enhancement Survey (LES))] measures to provide a descriptive evaluation of the impact of *Touch Talk Read Play* and other community level early language interventions on children's language development and literacy environment.

Parents and children will be recruited at an UT Le Bonheur General Pediatrics office visit. Parents will participate in face-to-face interviews (LES). The LES assesses the child's and family's participation in each program, the child's literacy environment, the ease of implementation of these programs for the family, and family satisfaction with participation in these programs.

Baseline and 6-month follow-up ASQs and LESs will be used to determine baseline and change in language development and literacy environment in children exposed to *Touch Talk Read Play*. We will also use the measures to compare children exposed to multiple programs to those exposed to only one program.

Historical data suggest that at least 80% of participating families will have been exposed to *Reach Out and Read* and approximately 50% will be enrolled in *Shelby County Books from Birth*. We expect fewer families will have been exposed to *Touch Talk Read Play* prior to this evaluation.

## Enrollment and Setting

We plan to enroll 100 participants in the study. Study participants will be children ages 12 to 24 months old and their families who are patients at the UT Le Bonheur General Pediatrics Clinic, an academic teaching practice affiliated with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. The clinic setting is urban and inner-city and most clinic patients are insured through TennCare (Tennessee's version of Medicaid).



## Literacy Enhancement Survey

1. How old is your child? \_\_\_\_years \_\_\_\_mo
2. Within the last 6 months did you sign up to receive books in the mail from Shelby County Books from Birth?
3. If yes, has your child gotten a book from Books from Birth in the last 6 months?
4. If yes, on a scale of 1-5 how satisfied have you been with the Books from Birth program?
5. If yes, how has receiving the books in the mail from Books from Birth affected your family?
6. Has your child received books in our clinic through the Reach Out and Read program in the last 6 months?
7. How many total books has your child received through Reach Out and Read?
8. On a scale of 1-5 how satisfied have you been with the Reach Out and Read program and books?
9. How has exposure to Reach Out and Read affected your family?
10. Have you ever received any information on Touch Talk Read Play ?
11. If yes, how satisfied have you been with the Touch Talk Read Play information?
12. If yes, how did the exposure to the Touch Talk Read Play information change how you interact with your child?
13. How many young children's books do you have in your home?
14. In the past 6 months, how often did you typically read to your child(ren)?
15. In the past 6 months, how often did you count things, do puzzles and play other learning games with your child(ren)?
16. In the past 6 months have you visited the library with your child?
17. In the past 6 months how often did you sing songs or say nursery rhymes with your child(ren)?
18. Do you read for your own enjoyment and/or to get information on a regular basis? If yes, how often?
19. On a scale of 1-5 how important is it to read to your child frequently?
20. What do you believe are important things that you can do to help your child be ready for school?
21. Can you think of a community message about children (like on billboards, TV, radio) that caused you to do something different as a parent? If so, what did you do differently?
22. Have your reading habits with your child changed over the last 6 months? What do you feel has had the biggest impact on reading with your child?

## Early Literacy Programs

