

Why early talk matters



What's the early talk gap?

Research shows that the amount of conversation children experience during the first few years of life varies widely, creating an early talk gap.

Early language exposure, in particular interactive talk, is one of the strongest predictors of brain development.

Capute, Shapiro, & Palmer, 1987; Gilkerson & Richards, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1999; Romeo et al., 2018; Noble et al., 2019



A baby's brain develops rapidly between the ages of 0-3, building more than one million neural connections per second!

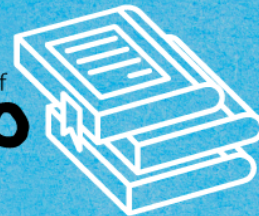
d'Apice, et al., 2019; Gilkerson et al., 2017; Weisleder & Fernald, 2013

Over time, the early talk gap...

Within the same first grade classroom, children with vocabularies of fewer than 2,500 words may be learning alongside children with vocabularies of 10,000 words.

Dickinson, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010

a difference of
7,500
words



Vocabulary at age 3 drives language and reading skills at ages 9-10, which strongly predicts high school graduation.

Hernandez, 2011

...becomes the achievement gap.

what can we do?

Invest Early

Every dollar invested in high-quality, birth-to-five early childhood education delivers a 13% return on investment.

HeckmanEquation.org



13%
return



Train Teachers

When teachers are trained how to increase conversation, the classroom makes measurable gains on CLASS scores.

LENA.org/ELCEC-year-1

Support Parents

Caregivers who receive regular feedback and coaching on the early language environment increase interactive talk and their child's language ability.

Gilkerson, Richards, & Topping, 2017



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Visit www.LENA.org to learn more about closing the early talk gap.