



Talk With Me Baby empowers parents to help their babies build a healthy brain and strong foundation for learning, reading and literacy through the use of good language nutrition.

THE OPPORTUNITY

High School graduation and post-graduation education/training correlate with gainful employment, better health and longer lives. In 2022, 33% of the nation’s children were reading on a proficient level or above by the end of the 3rd grade. For students enrolled in the NSLP, the results are even more sobering: only 19% of students from poor households read on the proficient level. * This means that up to 81% of these children will struggle with learning and achievement in school from the 4th grade on. As a result, too many will drop out of or underachieve in school. We can do better!

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of United States
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Read at Proficient
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THE EDUCATION – HEALTH CONNECTION		
4 YEARS OR MORE OF COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL IS CORRELATED WITH...		
5-7 years Longer Life	5% less risk for Obesity	1.3% less risk for Diabetes
12% less risk for Smoking	2.2% less risk for Heart Disease	

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, LANGUAGE, AND LEARNING TO READ

1. All of us come into the world with our brain architecture not fully formed. 80% - 85% of our brain development (neural connectivity) happens in the period from the third trimester of pregnancy to 3 years of age.
2. Just as we all need food nutrition for our bodies, we also need “language nutrition” for our brains. Language experiences that are frequent and of good quality during the first 3 years of life help make neural connections in the brain and build a stronger foundation for lifelong learning and learning to read.
3. Babies need to engage in many language rich-interactions each day for optimal brain and language development. We recommend about 15 minutes per waking hour (about 2,000 loving words/hour).
4. The type and quality of language used matters as much as the quantity. Using **Parentese, Serve and Return, Questions, Loving Words** and **Positive Affirmations** are great strategies to promote language learning. Babies’ brains are built one word and one hug at a time!
5. Babies exposed to good language nutrition develop bigger vocabularies. Vocabulary size at age 3 is highly correlated with reading levels by the end of the third grade. In turn, a child’s third grade reading level is one of the best predictors of high school graduation.
6. Talk With Me Baby informs families about the positive impacts of providing lots of loving language experiences for their babies and coaches them on strategies to optimize language interactions, brain development, learning, and eventually learning to read.



*The Nation’s Report Card: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/achievement/?grade=4> (Rev. 5/15/2024)

GET INVOLVED!

You can help start a Talk With Me Baby initiative in your area by simply engaging families and babies in conversation. Need help? Check out these suggestions for starting conversations.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **Conversation Starters for Baby**
 - “Hi, how are you feeling this morning?”
 - “What a nice (bow, outfit, hat, etc.) you’re wearing. Is that your favorite color?”
 - “I see you smiling! Are you happy today?”
 - “I hear you talking! Are you trying to tell us something?”
- **Conversation Starters with Parent/Caregiver**
 - “Have you heard that talking and reading with your child a lot helps them be a better learner?”
 - “What are your child’s favorite books right now?”
 - “Did you know that when you use a high-pitched voice, your baby really tunes in and it helps them to learn words?”
 - “See how your baby responded when he heard my/your voice? That’s his/her way of talking back to us.”
- **What to talk with babies about**
 - Describe what you or the baby are doing, seeing, feeling, smelling, etc.
 - Describe what is happening around you
 - Tune in to what the child is attending to/doing and talk with them about it
- **Strategies to keep in mind when talking with babies**
 - Try to get eye contact/eye level with the child
 - Keep your interactions positive and upbeat – smile!
 - Vary the pitch and tone of your voice
 - Pause when the child is initiating conversation with you
 - Pause after you say something to wait for their response
 - Use facial expressions and gestures to express emotions
 - Use real words and complete sentences



FUNDING & PARTNERSHIP

Talk With Me Baby (TWMB) was launched in 2017 at **Grady Hospital** in Atlanta, Georgia with support of the **James M. Cox Foundation** in partnership with the **Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School**. Recent independent research has shown that TWMB has lasting, positive impacts on children and families. **NACHC**, supported by funding from the **Sesame Workshop**, has adapted the resources developed for TWMB for use by health center OB and Pediatric clinics and are available on www.nachc.org. Hospital resources are available at www.coxcampus.org/healthcare.

