Little Talks: Enhancing and Expanding Parents' Facilitation of Their Infants and Toddlers Language Acquisition and Emergent Literacy

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- Lehigh University Team: Rachel Eisenberg, Julie Manzo, Amanda Gernhart, Jaqueline Faison, Tamique Ridgard, Jamie Whitenack, Laura Wallace, Kristen Martin, Alana Telesford
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Birth-to-Three: Critical Period

• Rapid development of language competencies
  – Cornerstone of emergent literacy skills

• Parents’ care and interactions are pivotal in children’s language development

Book Sharing with Infants & Toddlers

- Books create context and opportunity for talking and exposure to print
- Associated with a number of language and literacy-related outcomes (Bartl-Pokorny et al., 2013; Karrass & Braungart-Rieker, 2005)
  - However, what constitutes effective book sharing varies by culture (Caspe, 2008; Cline & Edwards, 2013)
Socioeconomic Disadvantage Impacts

- 25% of children below 3 years lives in poverty (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2014)
  - Percentage nearly doubles for low-income status
  - Among Hispanic children, 66% are low income

- Socioeconomic disadvantage can be detrimental (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012)
  - Parenting is a pivotal factor in mediating poverty’s impact
Offsetting socioeconomic impact

- Interventions for promoting book sharing among young children and their parents, who are from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds have insufficient evidence (Manz et al., 2010; Mol et al., 2008)
  
  - *Strengthen implementation supports for families may be one way to achieve effectiveness*
• Developmentally- and theoretically-sound intervention approach

• Evidence for benefits to children’s development is inconsistent (i.e., HomVEE; Avellar, Paulsell, Sama-Miller, & Del Grosso, 2013)

• Integration of evidenced-based, child development intervention is one way to achieve consistent child outcomes
Evidenced-Based intervention

Implementation Supports for Home Visitors

Implementation Support for Parents

Little Talks Pequeñas Conversaciones
Developing Little Talks

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY
Collaborative Inquiry

Steps

• Shared understanding of:
  – EHS program
  – Families
  – Book sharing intervention procedures and research

• Iterative process
  – Implement intervention
  – Obtain feedback
  – Refine intervention

• Formulate intervention for evaluation

(Nastasi et al., 2000; Varajas, Nastasi, More, Jayasena, 2005)
Iterative Process

• Starting intervention: Dialogic Reading
  – 8 to 10 week “trial”
• Home visits conducted by doctoral students on weekly basis
  – Combined parent training, assessment/observation, and parent input
• 3 iterations across 1 year
  – Intervention modified based on input
Iterations 1 & 2: Dialogic Reading Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Head Start Mothers &amp; Toddlers ($n = 18$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver age, yrs ($M$, $SD$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child gender: female ($%$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Ethnicity Hispanic ($%$)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child age, in months ($M$, $SD$)</td>
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Iterations 1 & 2: Findings

- Parents increased use of Dialogic Reading Strategies
  - Most frequently asked “what” questions
- Children acquired vocabulary related to books
  - 11 new words versus 5 new words for comparison
- Parents reported higher level of involvement in literacy activities
Reflection and Revision

- Dialogic reading strategies were too prescribed
  - Praise was challenging, yet also expressed in various ways
- Flexibility in intervention was necessary, so that it could be adapted to parents’ natural styles and existing routines
- Book sharing intervention needed to be intertwined with collaborative goal setting to assist families’ ownership of it
Emergence of Little Talks

• Educate parents in various speech acts versus trained specific reading behaviors
• Broaden expression of praise
  – Address it early and repeatedly
• Individualize families’ use of Little Talks through collaborative goal setting
Little Talks: “Basics”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Labeling</th>
<th>Simple Events</th>
<th>Character feelings</th>
<th>Personal Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That’s the lion.</td>
<td>The frog jumped up high!</td>
<td>The pig is so happy!</td>
<td>We went to the beach with grandma just like Little Critter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A frog!</td>
<td>The wind blew the umbrella.</td>
<td>The frog looks angry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>Where is the boy?</td>
<td>What did the boy do?</td>
<td>How did the little boy feel?</td>
<td>“Do you remember when we went to the beach?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is this? (a Wild Thing)</td>
<td>What is happening on this page?</td>
<td>Does the lion feel happy or scared?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What color is that?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Based Caspe, 2009; Reese & Cox, 1999)
Add On

Strategies

• Reflection
• Expansion
• Apply to gestures, babbles, and words

Praise

• Parent encouraged to offer verbal & non-verbal
• Recognize child’s behavior as well as verbal contributions
Little Talks

CURRICULUM
Managing book sharing interactions

- Praise and positive book sharing
- Following your child’s lead
- Engaging your child in book sharing

Responding to your child’s communications

- Reflecting your child’s communications
- Expanding your child’s communications

Telling/Asking about

- Labels
- Events
- Feelings
- Personal Experiences

Applying Little Talks to other activities
Materials

- Handouts for modules
- Books
Little Talks Design

• Individualized to families
  – Modules are sequenced and timed according to parents’ book sharing practices and preferences
  – Sequence and timing are collaboratively determined by home visitor and parent
Little Talks

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT FOR PARENTS
Starting Point: Book Sharing Plan

• Who would be with reading with your child?
• What would you be doing?
• What would your child be doing?
• Where would you like to share books with your child?
• When you like to share books with your child?
• How long would you like to share books with your child?
• How often would you like to share books with your child?
Home visit structure for Little Talks

- Observe parent-child book sharing
- Discuss observation

- Review books sharing plan and prior target
- Check on progress

- Teach or reinforce Little Talks module
- Problem-solve challenges to book sharing plan
Little Talks

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT FOR HOME VISITORS
Performance Feedback

• Performance Data
  – Little Talks record
    • Home visitor recording of Little Talks activities
    • Recorded through a mobile application
  – Video
    • Parent-child interactions (PICCOLO)
    • Home visitor-parent interactions (HVORS-A+)
    • Children’s language skills (ECI)
Supervision Plan

Community Development Partner (CDP): __________________
Lehigh Supervisor: __________________

Supervision Plan

PLANS DETERMINED AT END OF PREVIOUS SUPERVISION SESSION

1. 
2. 

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. 
2. 

GENERAL NOTES FROM BI-WEEKLY REVIEW OF LITTLE TALKS HOME VISIT SUMMARY FORM

1. 
2. 

PLANS AND PROCEDURES FOR CURRENT SUPERVISION SESSION:

1. Review the weekly data gathered from the Little Talks Home Visit Summary Form across families.
2. Prepare a visual (e.g., graph, video clip) for the supervision session for performance feedback.
   a. Use the SLAC-P model to guide your use of the visual in planning discussion for your supervision session. (What do/would you: See, Like, Add, Change = Plan?)
   b. Record what visual you will be using.
3. Complete the "strengths" and "supervisor observation" portions of the table below during planning.
4. Follow the order of items in the table to guide you through the supervision session and record your responses during/after supervision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDP</th>
<th>Observation to be Discussed</th>
<th>Summary of Discussion</th>
<th>Was the concern addressed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CDP</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leverage 4 strengths from the previous two weeks’ Little Talks Home Visit Summary Forms for discussion of constructive feedback:

Strength 1:
Strength 2:
Strength 3:
Strength 4:
## Supervision Plan

### Little Talks Modules:

**Supervisor**
Write 1 area of concern based on data review across families. Consider the LT Visit Records from previous weeks. Use the visual.

**OR**

**Collaborative Goal Setting:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item to Discuss</th>
<th>Summary of Discussion</th>
<th>Did teaching happen? (supervisor report)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Talks Modules:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AND/OR Collaborative Goal Setting:</td>
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### "Teaching" Preparation for Following Weeks' Home Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is one big take-away from supervision today?</th>
<th>What is one thing we can do to make our time here more helpful?</th>
<th>Plans for next supervision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
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</table>
Preliminary Findings

- Performance feedback in supervision
  - Little Talks curriculum was implemented well
  - Significant enhancement in home visitor decision making and collaboration with families
  - Little Talks home visitors increased collaboration with parents in other aspects of EHS visit
Preliminary Findings

• Possible improvement to parents’ teaching behaviors when interacting with children
• Possible increase in parents’ general involvement in children’s learning
Thank you!

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS