SPREAD THE WORD

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO CLOSE THE VOCABULARY GAP
PRESENTERS

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THE POWER OF WORDS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGWjkrErxOw
WHY?

• Children in low-income families experience 30 MILLION fewer words by age 3 than wealthier children.

• In the United States, 66% of children completing third grade CANNOT read at grade level and 80% of low-income children CANNOT read at grade level. (source: Annie E. Casey Kids Count 2014)

• 3rd Grade is the transition from Learning to Read to Reading to Learn.

• High school graduation rates are DIRECTLY linked to 3rd grade reading ability.

• Teachers and adult caregivers of children birth to 8 years old are critical for language and literacy development. (source: Rollins Center)
WHO ARE THE KEY TEACHERS OF VOCABULARY & LANGUAGE TO YOUNG CHILDREN?

Adult Caregivers & Educators

GROWING INTO READING

- **Birth**: language nutrition (words) sparks brain development
- **Age 3**: vocabulary predicts future reading comprehension
- **Age 5**: pre-literacy skills make a child “ready to read”
- **Age 8**: children should be able to read and comprehend
During the 10th Anniversary year, PNC planned to build on past work with grant partners to bring a more intentional focus on the importance of building vocabulary for young children.

PNC launched pilot projects in multiple cities – focusing on the family data – and partnered educational institutions with children’s museums and libraries.
GET READY WITH WORDS...
THE WHY

In Charlotte, only **39%** of students are reading at grade-level by 3rd grade

Reading proficiency 3rd grade=predicts high school graduation, career, and life success

**96%** of students who read on grade level will graduate high school

Early literacy at birth; caregiver as child’s first teacher; development of receptive and expressive language.
THE PARTNERSHIP: CHARLOTTE
## THE NEIGHBORHOODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grier Heights</th>
<th>Montclaire South</th>
<th>County Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median household income</strong></td>
<td>$17,000</td>
<td>$26,806</td>
<td>$56,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median age</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% of people on FNP</strong></td>
<td>78.1%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth to adolescents</strong></td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduation rate</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GET READY WITH WORDS...

Is a multi-year project that focuses on vocabulary building and oral language skill development through literacy, the arts, and science.

Takes place once a week in each neighborhood and is for 18 mos. to 5-year-olds and their caregivers.

Is designed to help low-income families with young children develop skills and routines that will promote vocabulary growth.

Promotes play through all of the disciplines and gives families the tools to play with their children at home.
HOW WE DID IT:
COLLABORATION AND A
GRASS-ROOTS CAMPAIGN WITH...

Grier Heights
Community Center

Meetings with Neighborhood Associations, Open Houses at neighborhood schools, Resource Fairs, Community celebrations

Families that spread the word about our program and staffers that went door to door with fliers

Three Charlotte community partners

Community Leaders

Community artists
4 DISTINCT COMPONENTS TO GET READY WITH WORDS

STORY TIME

ART

MUSIC

SCIENCE
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Developmentally appropriate principles of vocabulary teaching and learning for young children

• Repetition
• Knowledge networks
• Contexts and active play
• Explicit/implicit instruction
• Table “menu”
• Message during opening activity/story time
• Fortune Cookie messages
• Reminders at science/art stations
• Calendar of ideas
• Final message and questions
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Responsible practices for working with culturally diverse populations

• Bilingual approach for:
  • Context familiarity: books/explanations in both English and Spanish.
  • Development of new important concepts in native language and familiar context.
  • Engagement and connection: skills to support learning at home; cognitive, linguistically and emotionally connected while learning second language.
  • Advantages of knowing more than 1 language.
Get Ready with Words Year 2 begins with new words and new faces!

September 1-2, 2015

June 15-19, 2015
Get Ready with Words has its first week summer camps, which includes field trips.

May 2-3, 2015
Get Ready with Words graduates its first class with a ceremony and celebration for all of our amazing participants!

November 7, 2014
We attend our first Grier Heights Community meeting to introduce our program to influential people in the neighborhood.

November 25-26, 2014
Our first of 3 yearly festivals is held to include older siblings and more families.

November 25-26, 2014

August 2014
Planning for our weekly literacy, science, and art activities begins.

July 2014
Program is approved and work begins to hire staff and collaborate with communities.

October 14-15, 2014
The first sessions in Grier Heights and Montclaire South are held.

June 15-19, 2015

May 2-3, 2015

April 2014
Program is approved and work begins to hire staff and collaborate with communities.

July 2014
Conducted by *Open Minds* to document project’s impact

**Methods - data gathered through:**

- Monthly Reports
- Summaries from observations by associates
- Brief Informal Interviews (phone or in person)
- Surveys from Participating Families
- Texting
  - Walmart gift cards
Text - change in habit or routine.

Source: Family surveys (n=14)
Surveys – activities to help their child learn new words.

- Reading regularly: 64%
- Using a strategy (repeating words, singing): 57%
- Playing/interacting with child: 29%

Source: Family surveys (n=14)
THE PARTNERSHIP: ATLANTA

spread the word

Children's Museum of Atlanta

Atlanta Speech School
THE NEIGHBORHOODS: ENGLISH AVENUE & VINE CITY

Population: Approx. 6,000; primarily African American

Number of children under age 8: We are working with about 500 children and their families - 75% of whom live under the poverty line

High School Graduation rate: 76%

Community Strengths:
Active Community Organizations, including religious institutions to partner with
Support from City Councilman, Ivory Young & School Board member, Byron Amos
Partnership with Atlanta Fulton Public Libraries and the Fulton County Health Department sites in the community
Community Enthusiasm for family engagement
COMMUNICATION: BOOTS ON THE GROUND

- Focus Groups
- Walking & Talking (again, and again, and again 😊)
- Flyers
- Ad Campaign
- E-mails
- Websites: www.spreadthewordatl.org  
  - and www.atlantaspeechschool.org/READ
- Social Media
Focus Groups – What our first focus group suggested for programming:

- Peer-to-peer learning”
- “Self-discipline classes for parents.”
- “Teaching patience”
- “Mommy and Me classes, or Grandma and Me, or Daddy and Me classes”
- “Children Museum outings”
- “Field trips”
- “Go to a farm”

- “Toddler play group”
- “Toy-lending program”
- “Taking children anywhere outside of their normal environment”
- “Volunteer activities”
- “Affordable activities”
- “Why can’t we have a Saturday where we bring our kids to read?”
- “Family Movie Day where they show an educational movie or documentary.”
THE PROGRAMMING

- Family Engagement Session
- Cultural Community Experiences
- Books and Brunch

Bookmobiles | Pop Ups | StoryCorps | Teacher training
The Foundation of Learning

Listening, Speaking, Reading, & Writing

Meaningful Conversation
Interactive Book Reading

Responsive Interactions
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Tier 1
- Words children are likely to be exposed to throughout everyday experiences
- More *simple*

Tier 2
- Help build critical language knowledge
- More *rich, complex*
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SESSION

- Family Dinner
  - Builds Community
- Interactive Learning Experience (Parents)
  - Explore Strategies
  - Build Advocates
- Learning through Play (Children)
  - Explore Experiments
CULTURAL COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

Amari’s Adventure Book

Vocabulary Explore Habitat

Field Trip Zoo Atlanta
BOOKS AND BRUNCH - LIBRARY

- Story Read
- Extension Activities
- Explore Library
- Take Aways
EVALUATION

Pre/post assessments of literacy interactions and in-home literacy materials

Post-only satisfaction with Books and Brunch and field trips

Focus groups

Interviews with families

Field trip observation
EVALUATION

Parents Improved Literacy Interactions with their Children

- Had your child tell you a story: 40%
- Asked child what is in a picture when reading together: 30%
- Helped your child learn & practice a new word: 20%
- Asked child what happens next when reading together: 10%

pre-class to post-class
EVALUATION

Parents Increased Play and Literacy Materials in their Homes

- Puzzles: 50% improvement
- Paper for drawing or painting: 40% improvement
- Children’s scissors: 30% improvement
- Crayons or markers: 20% improvement
- Coloring books: 10% improvement
- Paint: 0% improvement

Percent improvement in families
LESSONS LEARNED

- Voices of parents necessary, through evaluations and focus groups
- Location, Location, Location . . .
- Two years is just a beginning
- The stages of partnership, the need for planning and chocolate!

- Community leadership roles
- The beauty of a pilot project and the power of social time
- Living through the four stages of group development
- Engagement during the summer
What partners in your community do you think could collaborate for a project like this?

- Community School of the Arts
- Discovery Place
- Charlotte Library
- Atlanta Speech School
- Who would be your ideal partner?
- Children’s Museum of Atlanta
Resources

City of Charlotte Mecklenburg County: charmeck.org

Read Charlotte: readcharlotte.org


Open Minds, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA

PNC Grow Up Great ®

[www.atlantaspeechschool.org/READ](http://www.atlantaspeechschool.org/READ)