

“Talking Is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing”

Early Math Intervention at CAP Tulsa

SO SMALL TO FAIL



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OPPORTUNITY
INSTITUTE

ABOUT TOO SMALL TO FAIL



Too Small to Fail, a joint initiative of the Clinton Foundation and The Opportunity Institute, is leading a public awareness and action campaign to promote the importance of early brain and language development and to empower parents with tools to talk, read, and sing with their young children from birth. Today, almost 60 percent of children in the United States start kindergarten unprepared, lagging behind their peers in critical language, math, and social-emotional skills. Through partnerships with pediatricians, hospitals, faith-based leaders, community based organizations, businesses, entertainment industry

leaders, and others, *Too Small to Fail* is meeting parents where they are to help them prepare their children for success in school and beyond. Whether at the pediatrician's office or the playground, *Too Small to Fail* aims to make small moments big by creating opportunities for meaningful interactions anytime, anywhere.

Learn more at toosmall.org. Find resources for parents and caregivers at talkingisteaching.org or on Facebook (facebook.com/2smalltofail), Twitter ([@2SmalltoFail](https://twitter.com/2SmalltoFail)), and Instagram (instagram.com/2smalltofail).

Too Small to Fail is a joint initiative of the Clinton Foundation and The Opportunity Institute.



"Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" is a public awareness and action campaign led by *Too Small To Fail*. This evaluation was conducted by CAP Tulsa, based on a partnership with the George Kaiser Family Foundation.



GEORGE KAISER
FAMILY FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a public education and action campaign led by *Too Small to Fail*, intended to equip parents and caregivers with the tools they need to increase early brain and language development among 0-5-year-old children. One strategy of the campaign is to enlist the help of trusted messengers to spread information about early literacy and brain development, and to motivate parents and caregivers to talk, read, and sing more to their young children starting at birth. This report presents findings from surveys of parents who participated in an early math intervention at high-quality Head Start centers in and around Tulsa, Oklahoma. Families who responded were receptive to learning about the importance of early math activities, and willing to use materials that promote early math with their children.



EARLY MATH MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED BY EARLY CHILD CARE AND EDUCATION TEACHERS

The Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa) is an anti-poverty agency that helps young children in lower-income families grow up and achieve economic success. CAP Tulsa provides high-quality early childhood education to the residents of Tulsa County, with supports that promote nurturing parenting and financial stability for the family. It operates 12 early childhood education schools, offering these services for children and their families at no cost, from birth to 4 years of age. The majority of children enrolled in CAP Tulsa programs are low-income.

Through a partnership with the George Kaiser Family Foundation and *Too Small to Fail*, CAP Tulsa sought to provide parents resources to support their child's learning and development at home, specifically related to how the introduction of math concepts at an early age yields long-term gains for children's later learning. CAP Tulsa early childhood educators distributed a suite of early math resources to parents in five of its schools that are intended to be informative, age-appropriate, and engaging. A group of 384 families with 4 year-old children received canvas Talking is Teaching tote bags stuffed with:

- Two children's books with early math themes (*Bedtime Math: This Time It's Personal*, *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*)
- "Let's Talk About Numbers" T-shirt
- Highlights™ Let's Talk About Math activity book
- Highlights™ Math Match-up Cards



The program employed a train-the-trainer approach: Instructional coaches were first introduced to the materials and talking points. They then trained classroom teachers on the materials and talking points. Those teachers distributed the bags and messages during parent/teacher conferences.

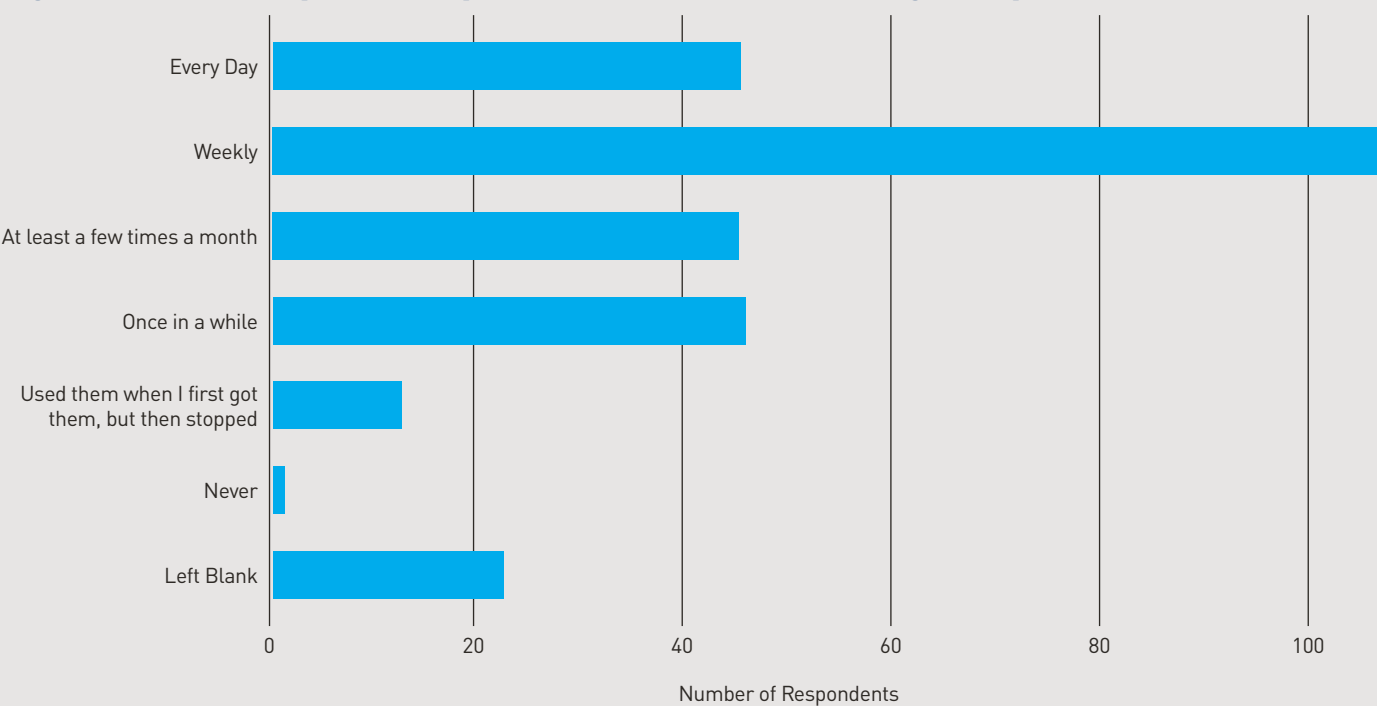
To understand parents' reactions to these materials, surveys were distributed in both English and Spanish to all parents who received the materials. Parents were surveyed about a month after receiving the materials.

REACTIONS TO THE TOOLS

Ninety-five percent of surveyed families remembered receiving a bag. Of these, 96% of families said they had used the tote bag materials – 194 English-speaking families and 65 Spanish-speaking families. When asked how often they were using any of the items from the tote bag, 54% of families said they were engaging at least weekly with the materials. Detailed results to this question are described below.

Families found the books (particularly Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed) and the math match-up cards the most useful. Overall, a majority of the families (90%) found the materials engaging, and fun to use with their child.

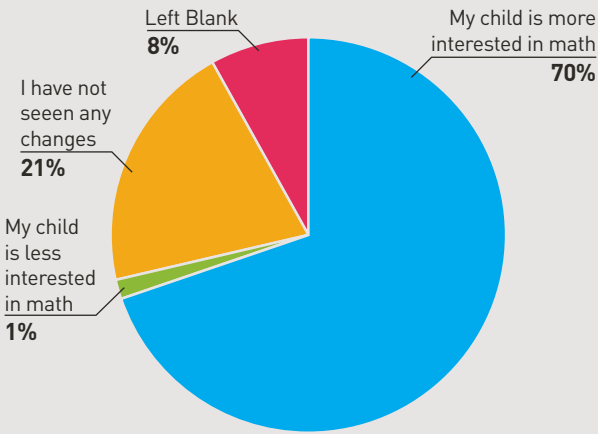
Fig 1. How often do you use any of the items from the tote bag with your child?



CHILDREN’S INTEREST IN AND RELATIONSHIP TO MATH

The majority of surveyed parents reported an increase in their child’s interest with math since they received the tote bag materials. A cross tab analysis of these survey results suggests that parents’ perceptions of their children’s interest in math was correlated with the frequency with which they reported using the materials.

Fig 2. Have you noticed any changes in your child’s interest in math since receiving the tote bag?

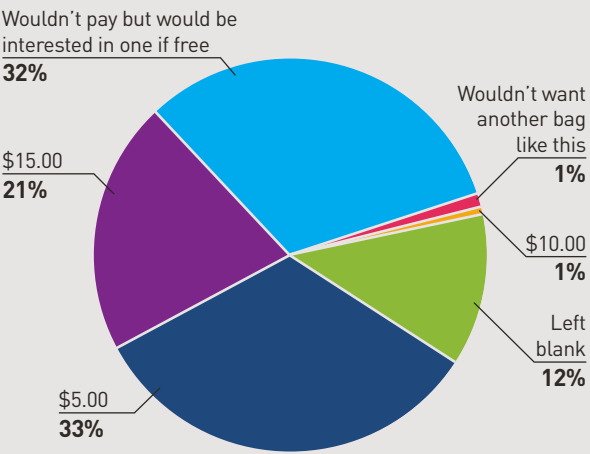


How often do you use any of the items from the tote bag with your child?	Use of materials (# of respondents)	My child is more interested in math (Cross tab analysis)
Every day	46	43
Weekly	107	77
At least a few times a month	46	29
One in a while	47	34
Used them when I first got them, but then stopped	13	7
Never	2	0

FAMILIES' VALUE OF THE TOOLS

To get a sense of the value families placed on the materials, parents were asked if they would purchase a tote bag like this one. Over half (55%) of parents indicated that they would pay some amount for these bags. A third of respondents said they would pay \$5, and another 21% said they would pay up to \$15. These findings suggest that the materials are valuable to families, particularly notable because the majority of families served by CAP Tulsa are low-income.

Fig 3. If you could purchase a new tote bag like this next year, what would you pay?



CONCLUSION

The goal of this project was to raise awareness of early math concepts among parents of young children, and assess the receptivity of parents to those messages. Surveys with parents a month after they received a suite of math-related materials suggest a few lessons for early childhood and early math campaigns like this one:

- Parents in this study were receptive to learning about early math concepts. A month after receiving these materials, over half of families said they were continuing to use them. Combined with the finding that the majority of families would be willing to pay for a similar bag, this suggests that the tote bag is useful and valuable to this population of families.
- The tote bag items all included messages and materials that remind parents of the opportunity to engage in math-related activities in their everyday lives. **Parents tended to identify the more hands-on resources to engage in reading and playful activities with their children** (i.e., books and a matching cards game).
- This intervention was based out of the CAP Tulsa early childhood education program, which provides high-quality care to low-income families in and around Tulsa. The high rate of parents using the materials provides some evidence that childcare providers are trusted messengers for distributing materials and messages related to early childhood development. Future studies should delve into whether distributing materials in early childhood education settings is more effective in leading to behavior change among parents than other settings.

Acknowledgements

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