

small Talks

A Think Small Speaker Series

Second of 3-Part Series

Building Successful Readers Begins at Birth

Join us for a conversation about specific public policy recommendations for supporting the early literacy development of children ages 0-5 in a range of early care and education settings.

Friday, February 9, 2024

9:00 am - 10:30 am CST

Virtual Event Only



Minnesota has
500,000 students
that are not
proficient readers

**Solving the problem starts
early and is mission critical
for Think Small.**



LENA[®]

Building brains through early talk

Learning to read starts at birth!

Conversational turns are important building blocks of preliteracy skills.

Measuring and increasing **conversational turns** supports the development of...



Adapted from Scarborough's Reading Rope. Visit LENA.org/conversational-turns to learn more about the science behind the power of conversational turns.

Science of Reading

→ **Is**

- A consensus among many related disciplines about how students learn to read, what goes wrong when students don't learn, and the type of instruction that works the best for the most students.

→ **Isn't**

- A single component of instruction
- An ideology or philosophy
- A one-size-fits-all approach
- A program of instruction

Intersection Between Science of Reading and Young Children's Literacy Development

- **Language Acquisition:** From birth, babies start absorbing language. The science of reading emphasizes exposing infants and toddlers to rich language experiences through conversations, storytelling, and exposure to a variety of words to build a strong foundation for language and literacy development.
- **Phonological Awareness:** Between ages 2 and 5, children develop phonological awareness—understanding the sound structure of language. Activities focusing on rhyming, alliteration, and syllable play aid in developing these foundational skills, crucial for later reading success.
- **Vocabulary Development:** Exposure to a wide range of words and experiences is pivotal. Reading aloud, discussions, and experiences that introduce new words and concepts enrich a child's vocabulary, supporting comprehension and expressive language skills.
- **Print Awareness:** Children learn that print carries meaning and understand the basics of how books work. Pointing out letters, words, and symbols in everyday settings, as well as exposure to books, helps develop print awareness.



Intersection Between Science of Reading and Young Children's Literacy Development

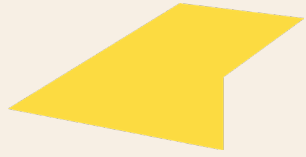
- **Phonics and Letter Knowledge:** By ages 4-5, children start connecting sounds to letters and recognizing letters. Teaching letter names and sounds in fun and interactive ways, such as games and songs, aids in early phonics development.
 - **Narrative Skills:** Understanding story structure, sequencing events, and making predictions are part of narrative skills. Engaging children in storytelling, asking open-ended questions about stories, and encouraging them to create their own narratives help develop these skills.
- **Engaging parents and families is critical!**
 - Parents and caregivers play a crucial role. Reading to children, engaging in conversations, and providing a language-rich environment at home significantly impact early literacy development.

Parents and caregivers are engaged and supported as indispensable partners in literacy development, and early care and education programs, across setting type and age group, offer strong literacy components, including specialized supports for multilingual learners and children with special needs.

Policy Recommendations

Leveraging Early Care and Education in Support of State Reading Achievement Goals

- Review and revise early literacy standards
- Incorporate early literacy into Parent Aware framework
- Identify curricula and assessment tools aligned with the Science of Reading
- Require Professional Development, Incent Creation of Courses and Coaching Protocols
- Develop Systems for Individualized Supports (Multi-tiered Systems of Support)
- Leverage Strengths, Innovate on Family Engagement
- Establish Accountability and Continuous Improvement Mechanisms



Alisha Wackerle-Hollman
University of Minnesota



Kiran Sheikh
Ampact



Mary Frances Clardy
MN House of Representatives



Candace Yates
Think Small





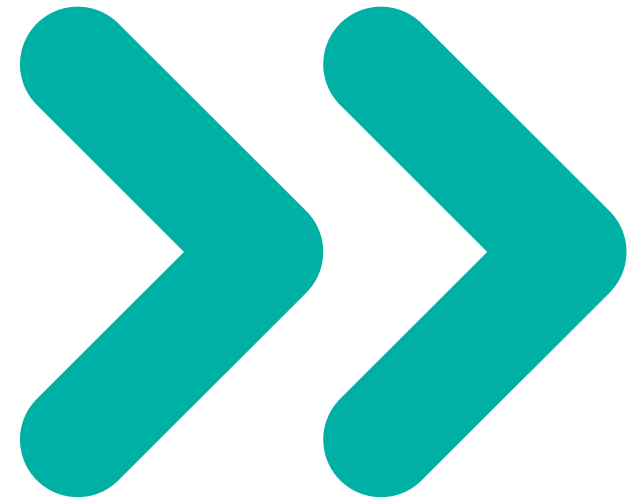
**Early
Learning**
CORPS

**Think Small:
*Small Talks Series***

February 9, 2024

Objectives

- Revisiting the Think Small policy recommendations
- Practical application through Early Learning Corps programming
- Learnings and Opportunities



Think Small Policy Recommendations

Review and Revise
Early Literacy
Standards

Identify Curriculum
& Assessment Tools
Aligned to the
Science of Reading

Explicitly
Incorporate Early
Literacy into Parent
Aware Framework

Review and Revise
Knowledge and
Competency
Framework

Develop Systems for
Individualized
Supports

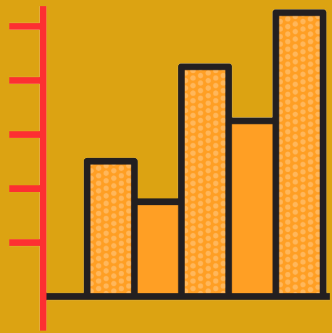
Leverage Strengths,
Innovate on Family
Engagement

Embed evaluation
and systems
measures,
continuously
improve

What is Early Learning Corps?

Blending the People Power of Americorps with the Science of What Works

SCIENCE

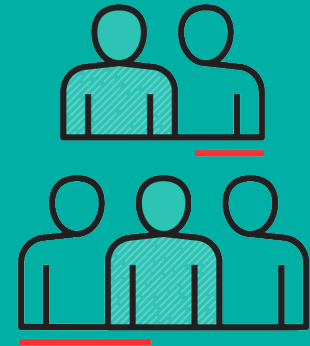


- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Empirical Research
- Implementation Fidelity
- Culturally Relevant



SERVICE

The Power of
AmeriCorps



Real Positive Impact

Present Day Scope of Early Learning Corps



- In MN this year, 139 Americorps Members, 2,870 children served
- Site types: Community and District PreK, Head Start, Childcare Center
- Recently launched Infant and Toddler program

Evidence for Early Learning Corps

- A quasi-experimental study evaluated the impact of Early Learning Corps on approximately 1,400 4- and 5-year-old students
- On each outcome measure (alliteration, rhyming, letter names, letter sounds, and picture naming) students in Early Learning Corps classrooms demonstrated significantly greater growth than those who were not.



What's happening ground level?

Embedded into the classrooms daily routine & support all tiers of the RTI/MTSS model

Making data-based decisions to make instructional decisions

Information gathering using screening tools for early literacy and numeracy

Engaging families using Talk, Read, Write & Count with Me! curriculum

Implement literacy, math, and s/e strategies/activities to all students.

Ongoing equity training and coaching support





Think Small Policy Recommendations & Early Learning Corps

1

Identify Curriculum & Assessment Tools Aligned to the Science of Reading

2

Develop Systems for Individualized Supports


3

Leverage Strengths, Innovate on Family Engagement

4

Embed evaluation and systems measures, continuously improve

Think Small Policy Recommendations



**Identify
curriculum &
assessment
tools aligned
to the science
of reading**

Learnings and Opportunities

- Parent Aware Approved Assessments
- Address the appropriate early literacy skills
- Quick, and easy to administer
- Frequent checks of fidelity in administration
- Training and professional development on equitable assessment administration

Think Small Policy Recommendations



**Developing
systems for
individualized
support**

Learnings and Opportunities

- Identify the adults and the practices to be "ready for students"
- Honor the whole child
- Intentional practice
- Relationships matter

Think Small Policy Recommendations




Leveraging
strengths and
innovate on
family
engagement

Learnings and Opportunities

- Meet families where they are
- Honor family strengths and traditional practices
- Tapping into community partners like ECFE

Think Small Policy Recommendations




**Embedding
evaluation and
systems
measures to
continuously
improve**

Learnings and Opportunities

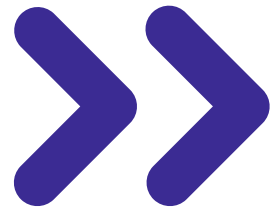
- Reviewing program practices is pivotal to progress
- Intent and Impact
- Quantitative and qualitative stories matter
- Revisit research...Math Matters in Early Learning Corps!



What drives us



The burden of "being ready" is on the systems and adults that surround young learners. We are there to see where children are in their learning journey and embed intentional opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills.



Questions?

Early childhood language and literacy development: differentiating supports

Alisha Wackerle-Hollman, Ph.D, NCSP



IGDI LAB

Meet Anya

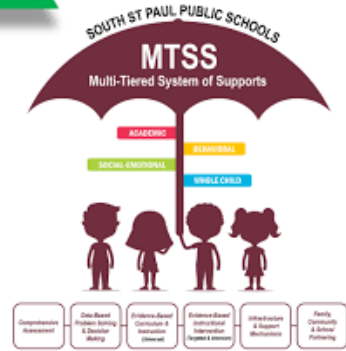
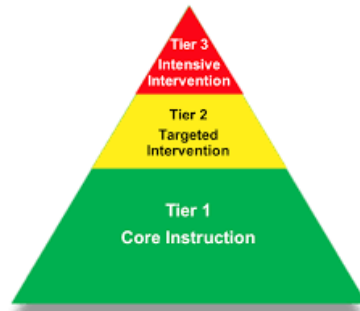
- Children need differentiated supports to maximize their language and literacy skills, but we can't effectively do this without consistently reminding ourselves to center their experience.
- Anya's experience occurs in a 3 year old preschool classroom during the weekday and at home with her parents and grandparents in a multigenerational home. They are all part of supporting her success.
- Anya speaks both African American English and Anglicized American English. She knows all of the letters of her first and last name and she loves to write and look at books. She has many memorized! She often chooses to look at books in the book corner during free play and she 'reads' to her friends who join her. She likes to point out the pictures and explain things to them.



The false dichotomy...



What is multi-tiered systems of support?



High Quality Universal Instruction

Rigorous Assessment models for screening and progress monitoring

Differentiated or Tiered Intervention

Caregiver and Educator supports and resources to facilitate learning



What might early childhood differentiated supports look like?

- High quality instruction
- Supporting children's identity through a language and early literacy lens
- Gathering data to understand what assets children bring to the learning experience.
- Educators who have the skills and resources necessary to know how to meet children where they are.
- Caregiver supports that create a collaborative partnership between child-caregiver-educator and community
- Engaging, developmentally appropriate intentional play and access to early literacy content.
- Considering all language variations children bring to learning and valuing multilingualism, variations, and varied experiences as meaningful.
- Data as both observations and opportunities for children to demonstrate discrete early literacy skills that align with the precursors of Scarborough's Reading Rope
- Professional development that feels complementary to nurturing relationship rather than an interruption to them
- Caregiver connections and resources that work with educators to build children's skills in ways that are fun, engaging and align with family values.

Who's voice is missing?

- We can't support early language and literacy skills with thinking about how our academic systems have not differentiated well for many children, as our state data show limited reading outcomes as children age.
- For those children who are underserved or from historically marginalized identities, it is important that we make sure their voices are at the table and prioritized to bring a strong equity-lens to making MTSS work in early childhood.



Revisiting Anya

- Anya's world is supported by caregivers and educators who are fully invested in her learning to read.
- Using MTSS in Anya's classroom means that her teachers and caregivers are aware of her assets, her strengths and her opportunities for language and literacy growth, and are working to nurture that growth.
- Anya's progress data tell a rich story of her growth, and her educators see value in that growth because it is a function of the learning they have done about literacy and language development in early childhood.
- Anya's classroom is full of opportunities for high quality interactions: they promote conversation, encourage play-based opportunities for literacy, engage in shared storybook experiences, and scaffold new vocabulary.



How can we support educators and caregivers to build language and early literacy skills for our earliest learners?

- Using frameworks like MTSS to differentiate instruction in developmentally appropriate ways can accelerate early literacy and language development and decrease instances of low reading performance in later grades.
- Scaffolding educator and family success with meaningful resources and high quality PD to connect the science of reading at these earliest years to every practices that nurture success.
- Engaging with communities to ensure children who have long been marginalized have equitable access to and benefit from state level literacy and language supports.

