

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” in Tulsa: Engaging the Faith-Based Community



Overview

Tulsa “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing,” brings together parents and community partners to improve children’s brain development and early learning. On average, a child from a family experiencing poverty has acquired 500 words by the age of four, compared to 1,100 words for a child from a high income family. George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) is tackling this word gap by mobilizing local medical professionals, educators and faith leaders that parents trust. Talking is Teaching empowers these trusted messengers with training and resources to inspire parents to actively engage with their children every day.

Importance of Engaging the Faith-Based Community

Faith leaders and members of the faith community were identified as trusted sources of parenting advice and support by local families, caregivers and teachers. Many families consider faith-based organizations as community pipelines for child development. Through the Tulsa Talking is Teaching campaign, faith-based organizations can effectively intensify efforts to educate their communities and support their parents with high-quality parenting practices and tools.

Strategy

GKFF is partnering with eight churches - many with members from low-income homes - to encourage early brain and language development. Through sermons, baby dedications, and intentional messaging, faith leaders inspire parents to talk, read and sing with their children from birth. Faith-based organizations are also sponsoring Family Engagement Nights, with dinner and literacy activities for families. The goal of these events is to show parents the power they have, through everyday activities, to improve their children’s learning.

Lessons Learned

Tulsa Talking is Teaching is further developing its faith-based strategies to address the specific needs of our partners. We are developing guidelines around orientation, recruitment, event preparation and curriculum instruction that will provide structure and direction for Family Engagement Nights, while allowing flexibility on implementation. GKFF learned, through observation, that successful engagement nights have a consistent team of volunteers who understand the curriculum and create an event space that encourages parent-child interaction. We know faith-based organizations are busy hubs of community activity, and we will continue to streamline the preparation process to make events efficient and easy to host.