

TALKING IS TEACHING

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT



This guide is intended to help centers launch an early literacy program for your ACCU. The Talking is Teaching program aims to build upon the learnings of the pilot so that caregivers of children with heart disease across PAC³ centers will know the critical value of their voices as part of their relationship with their child, their communication with family and care team, and the promise of better outcomes for kids with heart disease.

TALKING IS
TEACHING.

TALK
READ
SING

Contents

- Section 1: Introduction**.....3
 - What is Talking is Teaching?3
 - Health care impact3
 - Let’s Talk About Hearts.....3
 - Implementing the campaign: tools for change and nationwide expansion..... 4
- Section 2: PAC³ endorsement statements**.....5
- Section 3: Using the Talking is Teaching guide**.....7
 - Identify stakeholders7
 - Identify resource needs7
 - Select a tier for center engagement.....8
 - Develop a timeline8
 - Identify a location to store program materials:8
- Section 4: Step-by-step example**.....9
 - How to implement a Talking is Teaching campaign (roadmap).....9
- Section 5: Sample communication templates**..... 12
- Section 6: Feedback from families and staff** 14
- Section 7: Program evaluation recommendations**..... 18
- Section 8: Consolidated resources** 19

Section 1: Introduction

What is Talking is Teaching?

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a public awareness and action campaign created by Too Small to Fail, an early childhood initiative of the Clinton Foundation. Numerous prior studies have demonstrated the quantity and complexity of words young children are exposed to impacts brain development and helps to set the foundation for future reading and literacy skills. Further, children’s future academic success appears to rely significantly on the essential language development skills acquired during early life. ¹⁻⁴ The Talking is Teaching program aims to promote conversational turns and boost early brain and language development. ^{5,6} **This program works with local community-based organizations across the country to promote interactive, hands-on ways to emphasize the importance of talking, reading and singing with children every day.**



The campaign leverages three key strategies:

1. The first is to enroll **trusted messengers** who share campaign messages with caregivers, such as librarians, physicians and community leaders.
2. The second component is to place **environmental prompts** in the spaces families frequent to promote caregiver and child engagement and the initiative.
3. The final strategy is the use of **engaging materials** combined with the environmental prompts to **guide families to talking, reading and singing together.**



Health care impact:

Within the realm of health care, many of the Talking is Teaching communities have strategically engaged families by working with **primary care clinics and hospitals**. In an early pilot, pediatricians at the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital helped distribute a Talking is Teaching toolkit to families of children from birth through 3 years. They found approximately two-thirds of caregivers (63%) agreed they planned to interact differently with their baby after speaking with their pediatrician about the importance of early literacy.⁸



Let’s Talk About Hearts: How was Talking is Teaching selected by PAC³ and customized to children with heart disease and their caregivers?

Members of our own PAC³ Patient and Family Action Committee were familiar with the program and felt inspired to empower caregivers and caregivers with enjoyable and easy ways to foster their children’s development while hospitalized.

Our Patient and Family Action Committee worked with Too Small to Fail to develop a Talking is Teaching campaign tailored to children with heart disease. Thus, **Let’s Talk About Hearts, the Talking is Teaching pediatric cardiology version**, was created with the goal of offering developmental support by promoting the tenets of talking, reading and singing while admitted to the hospital. Our campaign includes the three core elements – with members of the health care team as trusted messengers. The environmental prompts are an informative and aesthetically pleasing poster and a tip sheet tailored to heart disease.



Implementing the campaign: Tools for change and nationwide expansion

The tools to facilitate change are kits consisting of the Hank the Heart book,⁷ a branded tote bag and a developmentally appropriate toy. This campaign started in the fall of 2022 at the acute care cardiology units (ACCU) of four pilot sites: Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, University of Michigan Mott Children’s, Nationwide Children’s Hospital and Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford University. Given the overwhelmingly positive feedback from families and members of the care team, PAC³ would like to spread the “Talking is Teaching: Let’s Talk About Hearts” program to acute care cardiology units throughout the nation. This package is designed to guide you through the process of implementing a successful Talking is Teaching campaign.

This program aims to build upon the learnings of the pilot so caregivers of children with heart disease across PAC³ centers will know the critical value of their voices as part of their relationship with their child, their communication with family and care team, and the promise of better outcomes for kids with heart disease.

References:

1. Hart B, Risley TR. Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children. P.H. Brookes; 1995.
2. Durham RE, Farkas G, Hammer CS, Bruce Tomblin J, Catts HW. Kindergarten oral language skill: A key variable in the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status. *Res Soc Stratif Mobil.* 2007;25(4):294-305. doi:10.1016/j.rssm.2007.03.001
3. Gilkerson J, Richards JA, Warren SF, et al. Mapping the Early Language Environment Using All-Day Recordings and Automated Analysis. *Am J Speech Lang Pathol.* 2017;26(2):248-265. doi:10.1044/2016_AJSLP-15-0169
4. Romeo RR, Leonard JA, Robinson ST, et al. Beyond the 30-Million-Word Gap: Children’s Conversational Exposure Is Associated With Language-Related Brain Function. *Psychol Sci.* 2018;29(5):700-710. doi:10.1177/0956797617742725
5. Talking is Teaching: About. [Talkingisteaching.org](https://talkingisteaching.org/). Accessed January 21, 2024. https://talkingisteaching.org/community-login?login-trigger&__cf_chlTk=zZ36USrC04cg_8COEMUGqNF72psLoPe2vqDsG2gqHH8-1705900835-0-gaNycGzNC5A
6. Too Small to Fail. Clinton Foundation. Published November 2, 2022. Accessed January 21, 2024. <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/programs/education-health-equity/too-small-fail/>
7. Hutton DJ, Moore DR, Musgrove C, Nelson M, Cimprich J. Hank the Heart. Illustrated edition. blue manatee press; 2020.
8. Too Small to Fail, “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” Early Literacy Intervention at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, September 2018.

Section 2: PAC³ endorsement statements



I have found caregivers relish an opportunity to positively impact their child’s wellbeing while they recover in the ACCU.

Dear PAC³ member,

Thank you for your interest in bringing the Talking is Teaching campaign for pediatric cardiology to your heart center. Our PAC³ Patient and Family Action Committee was inspired and helped create this specific poster and materials to engage caregivers during and after the hospitalization to talk, read and sing with their child. I have found caregivers relish an opportunity to positively impact their child’s wellbeing while they recover in the ACCU. Opportunities to boost their children’s early development through simple, everyday actions give them hope for a more normal and calm life when they get back home. Our posters and caregiver information sheets, available in English and Spanish, promote these engaging activities to support children with heart disease during their stay in the hospital and beyond. A secondary aim is to provide resources for emotional support during the hospital stay. When I hand out the resources and *Hank the Heart* books to families, I am always joyful to see their faces light up. I hope you join us so we can spread this joy to more caregivers in more centers!

In partnership,

Alaina Kipps,
PAC³ Co-Director
pac3quality.org



Dear PAC³ Member,

As a parent of a child with complex heart disease, there were many days during my daughter's hundreds of days in the hospital that I felt helpless and unsure about how to best connect with her. So much was out of my control. What I was able to do was talk, read and sing to her. What I was less aware of at the time was that my voice alone had healing power and grounded her in powerful ways. She knew it before she was born. The power of a caregiver's voice to soothe and stimulate a child's brain is profound. May Talking is Teaching provide you with a vehicle to communicate this important message to caregivers as they navigate the challenges of hospitalization. Your willingness to share this message will empower caregivers to continue to participate in supporting the healing process and nurturing their children's development in hopes they return home to grow big and strong. Thanks for joining us in this important mission!

Gratefully,

Missy Smith,

PAC³ Patient and Family Action Committee Co-Chair



The power of a caregiver's voice to soothe and stimulate a child's brain is profound.

Section 3: Using the Talking is Teaching guide

This guide was developed based upon the input and feedback from care teams and caregivers involved in the pilot. The subsequent resources have been built to set your center up for success as you integrate Talking is Teaching into your heart centers!



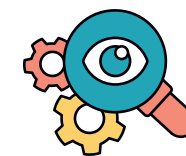
Identify stakeholders

Who are existing champions you can enlist?

Start small: Enlist a clinical champion, nursing champion and a Child Life champion for your unit.

Plan for future additional stakeholders/partners: ACCUs have the benefit of tapping local philanthropic efforts within their hospital system, and centers are encouraged to pursue those sources to start and sustain funding for this effort.

Hospital environments are rich with a variety of experts in supporting families with young children. Centers can enlist any of these support personnel (Occupational therapists, physical therapists, dietitians, educators, lending library volunteers and the like) to utilize graphics from Talking is Teaching to promote interaction specific to their area of expertise. All these additional staff are never intended to take the place of the clinical champions with the ACCU.



Identify resource needs

How many families are admitted to your unit/clinic?

Every patient and family who is admitted can be included in Talking is Teaching; the target age range is 0 to 8 years old. Reach out to your nursing leader or business admins to gauge the quantity of admits by month or quarter to begin to assess resource needs. **Suggestion: Look at six months of volume of kids 0 to 8 years old in your heart center and order that many books to have on hand. You should also determine the typical volume of patients who speak Spanish at home to include an appropriate number of Spanish books in your order.**



The "Talking is Teaching: Let's Talk About Hearts" campaign for pediatric cardiology embraces a holistic, patient and family-centered approach to care.

Dear PAC³ member,

As health care providers, we have the power not only to improve outcomes by tailoring treatments, but also by alleviating the negative impacts of illness on a child's quality of life. The "Talking is Teaching: Let's Talk About Hearts" campaign for pediatric cardiology embraces a holistic, patient and family-centered approach to care. With this campaign, we hope to foster moments of joy and make the hospital stay a bit more manageable by encouraging caregivers to boost their children's early development through simple everyday actions.

Thank you for joining us,

Azadeh (Azy) Issapour,

Program Champion,

Pediatric Cardiology Fellow at Stanford University

Select a tier for center engagement – Below is a table to get started by tier and recommendations to consider as you plan.

TIER 1: ENTRY LEVEL	*TIER 2: RECOMMENDED	TIER 3: COMPLETE PACKAGE
Materials (self-printed)	Materials (self-printed and purchased)	Materials (self-printed and purchased)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster Tip sheet (flier) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster Tip sheet (flier) <i>Hank the Heart</i> book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster Tip sheet (flier) <i>Hank the Heart</i> book Toolkits: branded tote bags and play item
EXPECTATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff on content, recruit trusted messengers to promote the program Print and distribute posters and fliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 expectations Book distribution Expansion of trusted messenger team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2 expectations Toolkit distribution
SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE INTERACTION WITH THE MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Life partnership Librarian partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 suggestions Hospital volunteer partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 2 suggestions Incorporate interactive play (creative outlets such as finger painting)
COSTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal printing and laminating costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal printing costs <i>Hank the Heart</i> book (English and Spanish versions each \$10 with bulk rate for nonprofits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal printing costs <i>Hank the Heart</i> book (\$10 each) Tote bag (\$5 each) with the optional upgrade to add a graphic printing or your heart center logo Play item (ex: small beach ball at \$1 each)

*Pricing variable based on order quantity, refer to resources section for quote.

Develop a timeline for education, engagement and start dates:

Talking is Teaching is built upon small touch points throughout a patient’s stay on your unit. It integrates into various moments of communication or education, and the environmental prompts provide supportive content to engage with families.

Identify a location to store program materials:

A team of trusted messenger champions at each site will be expected to locate an appropriate storage space for the campaign materials.

Section 4: Step-by-step example

How to implement a Talking is Teaching campaign (roadmap)

1. Obtain the approval of the ACCU medical director and/or heart center leadership.

2. Determine which tier your center would like to adopt and your target population. Note, tiers two and three will likely require fundraising efforts.

3. Introduce the concept of the campaign to the members of the care team.

- There is a [video](#) (less than five minutes) describing the initiative intended to be shared with your team in a group viewing (i.e., a staff meeting).
- Here is a [sample email](#) introducing Talking is Teaching, which is helpful to engage your sponsors/ medical director.
- Emphasize everyone can be a trusted messenger and help promote the tenets of talking, reading and singing together throughout the hospital stay.

4. Prepare the materials applicable to your tier of participation (see tier table with links to the environmental prompts).

- Consider creating a system for keeping track of which families have been introduced to the program.
- More simplistically, you can track how many total families were given materials each month.
- Trusted messengers can reference [this script](#) as an example of how to introduce the program when they distribute the materials or return to encourage engagement.

5. Roll out the campaign!

- Emphasize that although a family may receive Talking is Teaching materials once during their stay, the trusted messengers should continue to encourage engagement in the program.



**This is an added visual that can be used to highlight the Spanish version available for families.

Pilot center example: Phased spread by tiers

TIER 1

- **Materials:**
 - **Environmental prompts:** Poster and tip sheet PDFs in multiple sizes
 - Poster size: A3 for professional printing (already available)
 - Standard page: Ad-hoc printing/lamination
 - Optional printing materials: CHD Care Compass, PAC³ Caregiver Self-care Tips
 - Engaging materials are not provided with this tier, but we recommend encouraging the use of families' books or borrow from the hospital library
- **Expectations:** Print and distribute posters and fliers, train staff on content and encourage parent/caregiver engagement
- **Suggestions:** Partner with hospital librarian for books/literacy content and engage with hospital family advisory council
- **Initial costs:**
 - Printing posters and fliers

TIER 2

ALL OF TIER 1 PLUS:

- **Materials:**
 - Print additional **environmental prompts**
 - Purchase additional engaging materials
 - **Hank the Heart books**
 - Additional resources at: talkingisteaching.org/communities
- **Expectations:** Expansion of trusted messenger role and establish local champions of Talking is Teaching
- **Suggestions:** Partner with hospital volunteers for more face-to-face interactions with patients and families (e.g., dedicated reading time)
- **Initial costs:**
 - Printing posters and fliers
 - If feasible, we strongly encourage posting laminated A3 size posters in every patient room
 - **Hank the Heart books**
 - How many to order? Look at six months of volume of kids 0 to 8 years old in your heart center and order that many books to have on hand

TIER 3

ALL OF TIERS 1 AND 2 PLUS:

- **Materials:**
 - Distribute **environmental prompts** beyond the acute care unit (e.g., large framed poster in playrooms, cardiac ICU, outpatient clinics)
 - Purchase supporting engaging materials in addition to **Hank the Heart books**
 - Simple play item: an item that appeals to a broad age range and encourages gross motor development (e.g., small beach balls)
 - Tote bags (preferably branded with Talking is Teaching logo) to serve as another visual reminder and store tool kit materials
- **Expectations:** Expand the campaign within heart center (i.e., outpatient clinics, cardiac intensive care unit, neurodevelopmental clinic)
- **Suggestions:** Incorporate interactive play by partnering with Child Life for tactile learn and play and other creative outlets with literacy strategies to align interactive play
- **Initial costs:**
 - Printing posters and fliers
 - **Hank the Heart books**
 - Simple play items
 - Tote bags (preferably printed with the Talking is Teaching logo)



Section 5: Sample communication templates

Introduction email to ACCU team:

Dear team,

We wanted to invite you all to take part in the Talking is Teaching campaign for pediatric cardiology, an initiative brought to us by the Pediatric Acute Care Cardiology Collaborative (PAC³) Patient and Family Action Committee. “Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a nationally recognized public awareness and action campaign that encourages caregivers to boost their children’s early development through simple, everyday actions.

The PAC³ group has designed a Talking is Teaching campaign, customized for children with heart disease (ages 0 to 8 years old). The overarching goal of this program is to promote language and literacy development with the tenets of talking, reading and singing, offering support for children with heart disease during their stay in the hospital and beyond. A secondary aim is to provide resources for emotional support during the hospital stay (i.e. CHD Care Compass). Additionally, caregivers can learn more about becoming a member of the PAC³ Patient and Family Action Committee, which offers a means to connect with other caregivers of children with heart disease.

We would like to ask each of you to take on the role of trusted messengers to our patient families, by promoting the program to our patient families. This will entail sharing a Talking is Teaching tip sheet (flier) with families and encouraging them to talk, read and sing to their children throughout the day. **[Note: for tiers 2 and 3, change to “(flier) and a copy of the *Hank the Heart* book.]** There will be posters in all our patient rooms in the acute care cardiology unit for an easy reminder to encourage participation.

Here is a [short video](#) (less than five minutes) describing the initiative.

Introduction to Talking is Teaching script: for trusted messengers such as RNs, Child Life and hospital volunteers to use with families when they distribute the materials or return to encourage engagement.

Please show this tip sheet (flier) to families and encourage them to talk, read and sing to their children throughout the day. Here is some wording you can use when introducing the program to families:

“My name is _____, and I am <role>. Is this an ok time to introduce our Talking is Teaching program?”

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a nationally recognized program that encourages caregivers to boost their children’s early development through simple, everyday actions, including reading books together. A group of caregivers of children with heart disease wanted to help families get into the routine of reading together, even while admitted to the hospital. They created a tip sheet of helpful facts about making your hospital stay a little bit easier and simple activities you can do to help boost your child’s brain growth. Your team here wanted to share these tips, as well as an interesting book, that we hope you and your child can read together. Even if they cannot understand the book right now, just hearing you read will stimulate their brain. Some siblings of patients have also enjoyed learning more about the heart by reading this book. This handout also includes more information on the group that created this program and how you can join them to help other children throughout the country going through similar experiences. Please let me know if you have any questions about the program.”

Email to the ACCU medical directors (from a PAC³ parent/caregiver):

Dear Dr. XXX,

As a parent/caregiver, I’ve spent lots of time in acute care units with my daughter who was born with heart disease. I understand the incredible opportunities afforded to families because of the technology, innovation and quality of care at centers like yours all over the country. Caregivers who are part of our Patient and Family Action Committee also know there are new ways to engage families to support their stay in the hospital, expand their knowledge of children’s development and open the door to new ways of using their voice to improve outcomes for children with heart disease. We designed a tool for caregivers to do these things, and we are seeking your support to pilot our project at your center.

“Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing” is a nationally recognized public awareness and action campaign that helps caregivers recognize their power to boost their children’s early brain and vocabulary development through simple, everyday actions – like describing things while walking outside or singing songs together during bath time. Using books, videos, text messaging, social media and information from expert partners, Talking is Teaching empowers caregivers with fun and easy ways to improve their babies’ learning. The program has been used at Stanford University and the University of California, San Francisco in general pediatric outpatient clinics for a few years.

Our Patient and Family Action Committee developed our unique Talking is Teaching graphic and support tool (attached) that promotes the tenets of “talk, read, sing” to offer developmental support, guidance from caregivers with lived experience and an opportunity to learn more about being a member of our Patient and Family Action Committee and PAC³.

Every Talking is Teaching campaign project needs three components: trusted messengers, engaging materials and environmental prompts. Our project includes the distribution of the handout attached here, available in both English and Spanish, along with posters for display in common areas in the unit and the direct engagement from PAC³ site champions to talk with families about the materials, the opportunity to participate and the importance of talking, reading and singing daily with their children. Additionally, you can opt to distribute a copy of the *Hank the Heart* book to each family to further encourage the habit of reading while in the hospital.

Children are born with the need and desire to connect with those around them. When caregivers establish positive relationships with children from birth through the early years, children feel safe and secure, laying the foundation for healthy social and emotional development. This process affects how children experience the world, express themselves, manage their emotions and establish positive relationships with others. Caregivers of children with heart disease often have a different experience. The acute care unit is the setting so many families can first initiate these positive experiences that require our encouragement. We hope you will thoughtfully consider participating in this initiative.

Thank you for your time,

Missy Smith

Co-Chair, Patient and Family Action Committee

Pediatric Acute Care Cardiology Collaborative (PAC³)

PAC3@childrens.com

Section 6: Feedback from families and staff



“This helped the family get back into the routine of home activities. While they don’t understand the concepts in the book now, when they are older, we can reference *Hank the Heart*.”

“One family shared excitement for having a tool to talk with baby’s older sibling about baby’s heart.”

“A parent who is also in the medical field really appreciated the accuracy of anatomy and physiology of the book. They appreciate this is a book they can read to their child now as a newborn, and their child can read to them once in grade school.”



“I have seen and heard more staff talk about reading than ever before. I have also had staff ask for books and noticed a decrease in inappropriate screen time for infants.”

“We have a current 1 year old who LOVES books and being read to. I introduced mom to the program and provided the *Hank the Heart* book. Mom appeared very excited to add another book to the patient’s growing library and engaged with me when I spoke about the importance of reading and how beneficial it is to the patient’s development. Mom, staff and volunteers all spend time reading to the patient each day.”

“A 3-year-old patient received a tote and a *Hank the Heart* book. The patient and father spent a lot of time reading the book repeatedly on the day it was received, and when father was not reading, the patient was flipping through the pages on his own. The patient received additional donated books at bedside to read and take home due to his interest in Talking is Teaching books.”



"Hank the Heart is a wonderful family resource! The adorable illustrations and simple rhymes capture the attention of both my infant and toddler. The diagrams and fun facts will allow this book to grow with us through the years. Hank helps us to be brave as we navigate doctors' care to be heart healthy! Cora was diagnosed with critical heart disease at 19 weeks gestation; I only wish Hank was with us at day one instead of 16 months into our journey!"

"I am excited to learn more about PAC³ and bring additional support to Oregon families. CHD, complex medical procedures and multiple extended inpatient stays are hard to navigate. The journey changes our very being. That journey does not end with discharge. PAC³ feels like a good landing place to encourage continued improvement of patient outcomes and the inpatient experience."



Section 7: Program evaluation recommendations



• Evaluation statement

- Draft a statement related to what options/ideas for measurement to evaluate within their own center – what level of support PAC³ can provide (connection point).



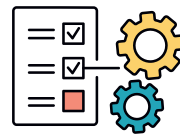
• Plan to integrate into patient-experience measures

- Track start date and monitor impact.



• Qualitative and quantitative feedback

- Tracking distribution.
- Partnering with Child Life or social work.



• Sample survey questions from PAC³ Talking is Teaching pilot program

- What is your role?
- Is the tote bag distribution going well?
- What is going well?
- What can be improved?
- Do you think caregiver interaction around talking, reading and singing has increased since the tool has been launched?
- What barriers might there be for continuing this program?
- Share a story or observation about a family engaging with this material.

Section 8: Consolidated resources

Talking is Teaching tip sheet: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Let's Talk About Hearts poster (English): [8.5x11](#) | [A3](#)

Let's Talk About Hearts poster (Spanish): [8.5x11](#) | [A3](#)

[CHD Care Compass Website](#)

CHD Care Compass flier ([English and Spanish](#))

PAC³ Caregiver Self-care [tip sheet](#)

PAC³ Grand Rounds Recording: [#MentalHealthMatters: Enhancing Patient and Family Mental Health in Pediatric Acute Care Cardiology](#)

[Talking is Teaching campaign website](#)

For Talking is Teaching design elements, [sign up here for access](#)

- Once you have an account, you can login at the same link to find official fonts, logos, illustrations, etc.

How to order books for nonprofits:

- **Special pricing applies:** If ordered in carton quantity (28 copies), \$9.00 per copy. If ordered outside of carton quantity, \$10.00 per copy.
- **You can place an order by completing this order form:** [Hank the Heart nonprofit order form](#)
- Completed order forms can be sent via email to sales@bluemanateebooks.com or faxed to 513-672-2679. **Payment is required within 15 to 30 days of placing an order.** If you have any questions, please feel free to [contact us](#).
- **For orders of 600 copies or more,** please contact the distributor directly for stock availability and ordering information.

For additional information or any questions,
please email us at PAC3@childrens.com

