

## Overview

A campaign to get us talking more and talking differently to babies and young children.

**Our vision:** Children flourishing as thinkers, talkers and readers  
**Our goal:** To increase the quality and quantity of interaction and talk with children aged 0-3 years

### Why do we need a Talking Matters campaign?

The Talking Matters campaign is a call to action because oral language in the early years is an equity issue. Some children in Auckland are starting school with the oral language we would normally expect of three-year-olds. That disadvantage is a significant contributor to the achievement gap between our poorer and more affluent children. The majority of children with low oral language live in low-socio economic communities.



- Families are keen to support their children's learning but don't always know the speed at which babies learn and the power of language in shaping their life chances.
- The value of home languages in building communication and literacy is not always acknowledged. It is increasingly important as more families are culturally and ethnically diverse.
- Oral language is a pre-condition for reading and writing, yet there has been less focus on oral language in policy, funding and professional development.

There is no single solution for this complex set of issues. Families, whānau, educators, family facing services and community organisations need to work together to find solutions that fit local contexts.

### What's happening 2017-2018?

This year is our discovery phase. We are exploring what works for families in small-scale pilot projects in three different communities (Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Tamaki and Puketapapa). We are learning what may be effective for Talking Matters to replicate and scale up. All ideas and resources developed will be available free and open source for use elsewhere in the country. We are:

- Supporting parent-led community action on talking, reading and storytelling with babies and young children.
- Developing and sharing tools, resources and strategies to support parents, whānau and families to interact, talk more and talk differently with children.
- Building capability in education, health and family services.
- Advocating for oral language to be more widely recognised, prioritised and resourced.

## Why is talk so important for children?

The research is clear. Children's early experiences shape their overall development and ability to learn. The first three years are particularly important for building the capacity to love, learn, think and communicate. Interaction and talk help shape a child's brain architecture and influences their social, emotional and intellectual capabilities throughout their lives. Talk is important in whatever languages families use – it doesn't have to be in English. For babies and toddlers, the language/s of their family matter most.

## What happens if children don't experience rich oral language?



Functional talk – the talk of everyday wants and needs – may be loving but is not enough on its own to grow and expand a child's understandings and expressive power in deep and meaningful ways.

Children who don't experience a lot of interaction and talk may not grow a wide vocabulary, may struggle to express themselves and have limited access to complex ideas and thinking. In turn, this affects their thinking, creativity, problem-solving and ability to form relationships. They may struggle to learn to read or write.

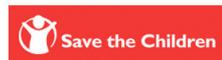
## What does talk more and talk differently mean?

Our campaign encourages families and services to take opportunities to involve children in extended conversations and quality interactions. To and fro talking, singing, storytelling, talk-accompanied playing and doing are critically important if a child's thinking and language is to flourish.

Families and communities will have a range of approaches that fit their language, culture, values and their circumstances. The key is to be intentional and to aim high. Children are learning faster and are capable of so much more than many of us expect.

## Who's involved?

Talking Matters is led by COMET Auckland, an independent education trust linked to Auckland Council, with seed funding from the NEXT Foundation. We work with strategic partners and a growing number of community organisations, plus more than 280 members of the Talking Matters Network.



Join us on Facebook @TalkMattersNZ

Join the network at

<http://www.talkingmatters.org.nz/>

Contact us at

[talkingmatters@cometauckland.org.nz](mailto:talkingmatters@cometauckland.org.nz)