

# TOO SMALL TO FAIL'S PUBLIC ACTION CAMPAIGN

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*Too Small to Fail* is a joint initiative of Next Generation and The Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation. The goal of *Too Small to Fail* is to help parents, caregivers, communities and businesses take meaningful, evidence-based actions that will improve the health and well-being of America's youngest children, ages zero to five, and prepare them to succeed in the 21st century.



## Why Too Small to Fail Is Needed

Research conducted over decades and across multiple disciplines demonstrates the importance of early health and learning for individuals' growth and success. From the moment children are born, they begin learning about the world around them. Every sound, every sight, every touch, every spoken word—all of these things get gathered together and filed away to be referenced and built upon with every interaction as the brain develops. While people continue to learn throughout their lives, the most important years for brain development are the early years.

It is during these first few years of life that we learn language, important social and emotional skills, critical thinking, and how to focus on tasks at hand. Yet many children in our country don't receive the basic nutrition they need in the earliest years of life to start strong. Many start kindergarten unprepared, lagging behind their peers in critical skills from vocabulary acquisition and early numeracy to attention span and self-control. More and more grow up with chronic health conditions ranging from obesity to asthma to autism.

Parents and caregivers want to do right by their children and search for the best ways to help them. But they need support from communities and businesses to help them succeed.

## Seizing the Opportunity: What We Can Do Now

At Too Small to Fail, we believe that simple, everyday actions will improve kids' lives. We also believe that an effort aimed at supporting and promoting concrete actions by parents, caregivers and early childhood educators, as well as business leaders, can benefit our kids today and catalyze a shift in cultural and social norms that will support needed investment in the future.

## Public Action Campaign Aimed at Parents and Caregivers

We are building a public action campaign that will span the areas of early learning, early health and family support. Our immediate efforts will focus on a serious obstacle in early learning—specifically, the vocabulary gap, which we see as a critical but not intractable challenge.



Research shows that very poor children typically hear 30 million fewer words addressed to them by age 3 than higher-income children. This gap in hearing words translates directly into a gap in acquiring words. Typically, an average child from a low-income family has acquired 500 words by the age of 3, compared to 700 words for a child from a working-class family and 1,100 for a child from a professional family. The research is clear that it isn't about hearing words from adult conversations or from a television that is turned on. A child's ability to acquire vocabulary is directly tied to parents and caregivers talking directly to and interacting with their infants and toddlers

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*Did you know?*

*On average, a 3 year-old child from a professional family knows 1,100 words while a child from a low-income family knows only 500.*

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The two factors that most explain the income-related gaps in school readiness are parenting styles and home learning environments. This means that if we can better equip parents with the knowledge and tools to succeed as their children's first teachers, and mobilize them to act on that knowledge and use those tools, we could see a significant decline in the school readiness gap.

## Too Small to Fail's Messages for Parents and Caregivers

Through media partnerships and in partnership with the entertainment industry, *Too Small to Fail* will reach and empower parents with some simple messages:

- ✓ Every child deserves the best possible chance at success. Young children who hear more words at home are better prepared to succeed in school and in life. So narrate your day to your baby, read with your child at least 15 minutes a day, and find ways to bond with your baby or toddler by hugging, playing games, singing songs, and telling stories. You'll be helping her learn, and helping her build a better future.
- ✓ Talking with your baby every day—describing what you see on a trip to the grocery store, or asking what she sees on a walk—helps her learn. The more words babies hear in everyday interactions with adults, the better prepared they will be to learn.
- ✓ Singing songs and telling stories to your baby helps him bond with you, and helps his brain develop. The more words he hears from you and other caregivers every day, the better prepared he will be to learn.
- ✓ Hugging, laughing, and sharing close moments helps your baby bond with you, and helps her brain develop. The more words she hears from you and other caregivers—and the more positive experiences she has with you—the better prepared she will be to learn.

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Talking to me during daily activities  
could give me thousands  
of new words?



In the months ahead, *Too Small to Fail* will be building media partnerships and working with the entertainment industry to promote these messages.