

INTERIM EVALUATION FINDINGS:

Teachers Acquiring Language Learner Knowledge (TALLK), 2006-07

This report provides a summary of interim evaluation findings for the 2006-07 Teachers Acquiring Language Learner Knowledge (TALLK) project. These findings are derived from two evaluation instruments completed by 93% of program participants as well as data submitted by TALLK staff in progress reports to First 5 Sonoma County. The purpose of this report is to stimulate dialogue and surface additional questions for exploration among Commissioners, service providers, and other interested parties.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The TALLK project provides preschool teachers with training and coaching in specific strategies for interacting with English Learners (EL) children to best support language acquisition. TALLK is based on the research-demonstrated best practice of providing adult education through a combination of didactic information sharing followed up with coaching. Fundamentally, TALLK supports the language development of English Learners, especially those whose home language is Spanish.

Participating teachers attend a full-day orientation training at the beginning of the year, and are subsequently provided one-hour monthly trainings at their sites. The TALLK coach also works with teachers bi-weekly for approximately 30 minutes by observing teacher-child interactions and providing real-time input and support using a “telepresence approach” (i.e., the teacher wears a headset and the coach communicates via microphone in real time). The TALLK project serves preschools within First 5 Sonoma County’s School Readiness Initiative “zone.” The specific sites served are provided below.

Site Name	Site Type	Number of Classrooms
AM/PM Multicultural Child Development Center	State Preschool	2
Lincoln Head Start	Head Start	1
Monroe 4C's State Preschool	State Preschool	1
Roseland Apples and Bananas, Roseland School	State Preschool	2
Roseland Apples and Bananas in Roseland Center, Sheppard School	State Preschool	1

The following tables illustrate how TALLK links to First 5 Sonoma County’s strategic plan elements, as well as provide administrative information for the program.

Links to First 5 Sonoma County Strategic Plan Elements	
Goal Area	Early Care and Education
Priority Outcome	Early child care and education will be of the highest quality.
Pathway to Results Indicator	ECE providers use best practices in literacy and language development

Administrative Information	
Funding Period	December 2006 – June 2010
Funding Amount	\$480,000
Contractor	Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE)

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PROGRAM THEORY

Language development in children is impacted by the quality of conversation between the teacher (or other adult) and the child. Language development is enhanced when adults:

- build on and extend what a child is saying,
- engage children in talk about cognitively rich topics,
- use varied vocabulary, and
- sustain a conversation about a single topic.

Preschool teachers need training and support to learn and implement these strategies. Research has shown that coaching, especially using ‘telepresence’ techniques, is an effective way to “help preschool teachers transfer what they learn about new practices in a training setting to their classrooms and establishes an environment in which teachers strive to improve practice without fear of criticism or evaluation” (Neufeld and Roper 2003). TALLK provides teachers with instruction and implementation support in these effective language development strategies.

EVALUATION METHODS

This interim evaluation includes data from progress reports submitted to First 5 Sonoma County as well as analysis of the following two surveys completed by participating preschool teachers:

- **TALLK Teacher Assessment of Coaching Received** – At the end of the project year, 26 of 28 (93%) participating teachers assessed the TALLK coaches’ style and effectiveness.
- **End-of-Year Evaluation of TALLK Project** – At the end of the project year, 26 of 28 (93%) participating teachers assessed the TALLK project overall.

For 2007-08, additional results on the effectiveness of TALLK will be available from the following data collection instruments*:

- **TALLK Teacher Self-Assessment** – At the beginning (baseline) and end (follow-up) of the project year, participating teachers will assess their use of specific strategies identified by the literature as effective for supporting language development with the children they serve.
- **Observation Sheet for English Learner Strategies** – At the beginning (baseline) and end (follow-up) of the project year, the TALLK coach will assess participating teachers’ ability to implement these language development strategies.
- **TALLK Monthly Training Evaluation Survey** – 30 days post-training, teachers will evaluate the TALLK monthly trainings.

* These data collection instruments were not developed in time to be used during the 2006-07 implementation of the program.

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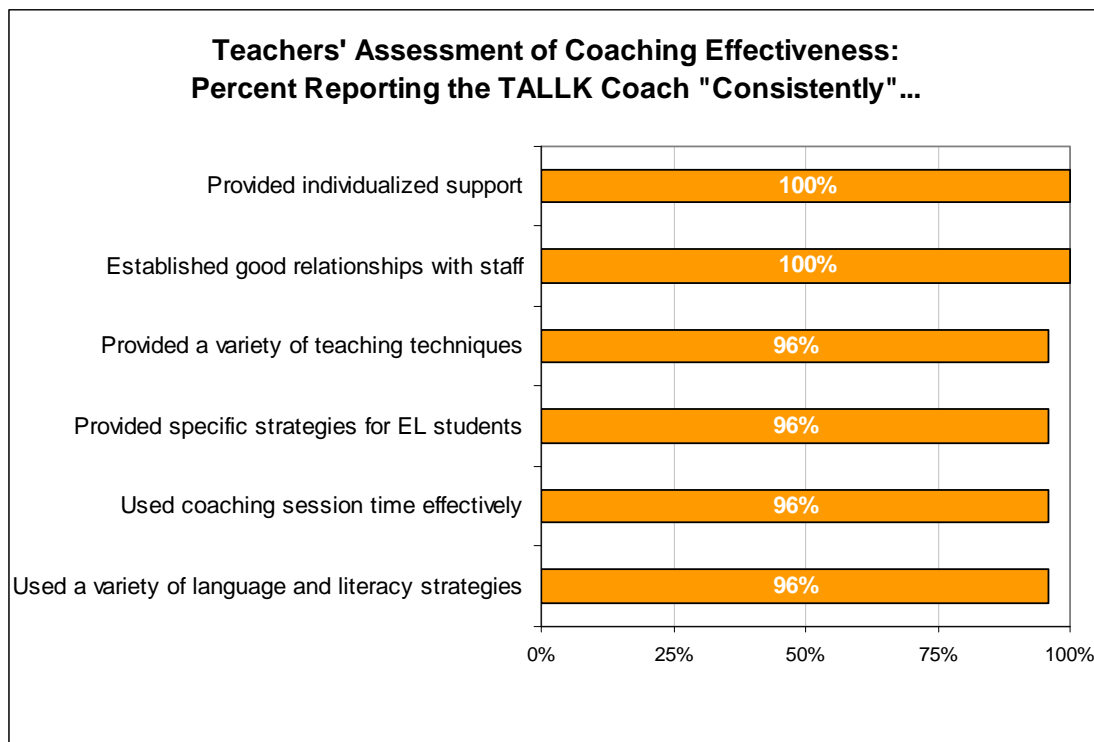
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Process Findings: Services Provided

**TALLK Project Achievement of Process Measures:
November 2006 to May 2007**

Process Measures	Target	Actual	Notes
Number of Teachers Served	15-20	28	Target exceeded by 40%
Number of Individual Site Trainings Provided	1 training per month per site = 25	25	Target achieved: 5 monthly trainings at 5 sites (2 sites meet together)
Number of One-on-One Coaching Sessions Provided	2-3 per week per teacher	2 per week per teacher	Actual is on the low end of target range because TALLK served more teachers than proposed
Number of Children Reached in Classrooms Served	100	260	Target exceeded by 160%

Process Findings: Coach Effectiveness

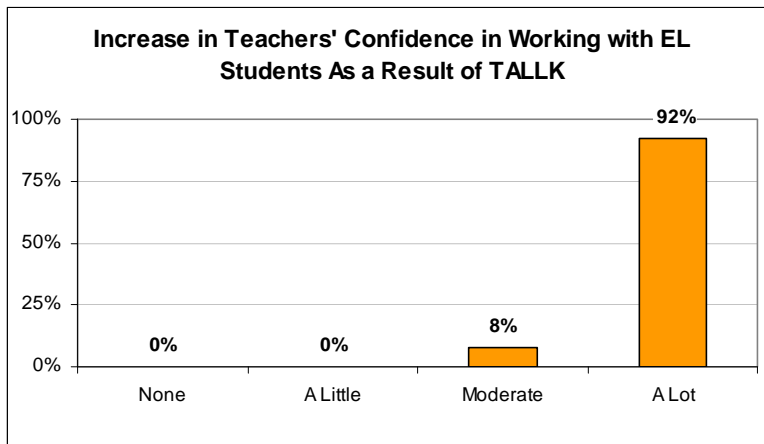


Key Findings

- 100% of teachers reported the TALLK coach performed “consistently” or “frequently” on all measures of coach effectiveness.
- In response to the open-ended question, ‘what was most helpful about TALLK?’, 61% (28 out of 46) identified the overall excellent quality of coaching received.

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Outcome Findings: Teacher Improvements



Key Findings

- 92% of teachers reported their confidence in working with English Learner students increased “a lot” as a result of the training and coaching they received through TALLK.
- In response to an open-ended question asking what they had gained from participation in TALLK, teachers’ reported the following:

Teachers’ Reports of Outcomes Experienced from Participation in TALLK

Teacher Outcomes	Number of Responses *	Percentage of Total Responses (n=46)
Learning new ideas, activities and teaching strategies for building language and literacy	21	46%
Improved communication/interactions with children (including translation support and learning how to talk with children through an activity)	13	28%
Opportunity to share ideas and strategies	8	17%
Information presented in the program book	6	13%

* The sum of this column is 48, rather than 46, because some comments fall in more than one category.

Outcome Findings: Children

During the 2006-07 program year outcome data on children being served by TALLK participants was not available. Results from the Desired Results Developmental Profile Revised (DRDP-R) will be available for children in one Head Start classroom that received TALLK services and one comparable Head Start classroom that did not receive TALLK services for the 2007-08 year.

The DRDP-R is an assessment tool used to gauge a child’s degree of mastery in various domains, including literacy and language development. It is hypothesized that children in a classroom receiving TALLK services, compared to children in a classroom that is not receiving TALLK services, will experience a greater increase from the start of the year to the end of the year in their DRDP-R results in the literacy and language development domain.

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Additional Teacher Perspectives

Participating teachers suggested ways the TALLK project could be improved. Their recommendations are synthesized in the table below.

Teachers' Suggested Areas of Improvement for TALLK

Areas for Improvement	Number of Open-Ended Comments*	Percentage of Total Comments (n=65)
Program and coaching are excellent; no significant changes are necessary	22	34%
Make trainings longer	9	14%
Headset was not helpful/distracting	8	12%
Increase coach demonstration/ modeling of literacy strategies	8	12%
Tailor instruction to individual learning goals/styles	6	9%
Add more coaching staff	5	8%
Address strategies for parent communication	4	6%
Provide greater opportunity for reflection and sharing of ideas	4	6%
Documented or record trainings	3	5%

* The sum of this column is 69, rather than 65, because some comments fall in more than one category.

CONCLUSIONS, ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION, AND NEXT STEPS

Conclusions

- The TALLK project appears to hold significant potential as a strategy for training teachers in specific strategies for interacting with English Learners (EL) in ways known to support language acquisition.
- Participating teachers universally rated highly the quality of the coaching and support they received.

Additional Questions and Next Steps

The ongoing TALLK evaluation can inform replication of the model by exploring questions raised by this interim analysis. The following provides questions raised and identifies next steps for addressing them.

Additional Questions for Exploration	Next Steps to Address
1. Is the early success of this implementation of the TALLK model explained largely by the quality of the coach? Can the effective aspects of this coach's practices be shared through a train-the-trainer model?	The TALLK coach will be training new coaches for SCOE's expansion into elementary school settings. Evaluation efforts will be coordinated between First 5 and SCOE to compare and monitor results.
2. To what extent are teacher outcomes sustained over time?	A long-term teacher survey can be developed and administered at 12-month follow-up intervals.
3. Do the outcomes seen for teachers translate into positive language development outcomes for children?	At the end of the 2007-08 year, DRDP-R results from a TALLK classroom and comparable non-TALLK classroom will be analyzed to explore the hypothesis that TALLK classroom children experience greater increases in language development than children in non-TALLK classrooms.