



Peninsula Health
Community Health

Enhanced *Teacher Talk*TM

Final Report
Executive Summary

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Prepared for:

Hastings Linking Schools and Early Years Partnership

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Executive Summary

In 2009, the Linking Schools and Early Years (LSEY) project commissioned the Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute to develop a nested study in the Hastings LSEY site, Speech and Language in the Early Years (SALTEY) to gain a deeper understanding of speech and language in the early years with a view to generating evidence to guide local service provision, programs and policy.

Following the SALTEY report the Hastings LSEY Partnership developed the goal: 'All community health and education services and systems, support and promote early language and literacy development'. Peninsula Health Community Health (PHCH) proposed to the LSEY partnership a program aimed at building the capacity of the local early childhood practitioners (working with children birth to school entry) to deliver language enriched programs and identify language delay with comprehensive training in an enhanced Hanen *Teacher Talk™* program.

The main objective of the program was to increase the capacity of local early childhood educators (childcare/preschool staff) to provide a rich and stimulating language learning environment for young children, by using practical, interactive strategies for building their social, language and early literacy skills and become aware of children whose language was not developing typically.

Training was offered to educators free of charge locally at the Hastings Community Health Centre. Three training modules were offered, one per term in each of terms two, three and four, with the entire program spanning an eight month period. During weeks three & five of each term the facilitator visited each of the participants in their centres. At this time, each participant was videotaped for approximately five minutes while interacting with a group of children in their care. The participant met with the facilitator in a private room to view the video, reflect & analyse their use of the strategies and set further goals. The facilitator visited each participant again in weeks nine-ten of each term, to once again conduct a video-feedback session, and provide an opportunity to 're-visit' & consolidate the strategies learned in the current module.

Thirteen early childhood educators enrolled in, and completed the program, representing four of the five main early childhood education centres in the Hastings township.

Each video recording was analysed by the facilitator using the Teacher Interaction & Language Rating Scale to determine the extent that each of eleven strategies was used by the participants. Each strategy was rated on a 7-point scale based upon the frequency of occurrence, ranging from 'almost never (1), sometimes (3), frequently (5) and consistently (7)'.

There was a statistically significant increase in the average use of all strategies combined, as a percentage of total opportunities across the nine video time periods (the time period between each video feedback session varied between two-four weeks).

For five of the eleven strategies introduced during the program, there was a statistically significant relationship between participation in the program and participants' ratings using the Teacher Interaction Rating Scale (TILR). For a further three strategies, the p-value approached 0.05, suggesting that a larger sample size may help to identify a significant relationship.

Over the course of the program, the facilitator observed changes within the centres, beyond those witnessed during individual video recording. These included changes to the way rooms were set-up, with a notable increase in small inviting play spaces where a small number of children could interact.

Twelve participants stated that as a result of the *Teacher Talk™* program, they were more aware of how they interacted with children, and more confident in their ability to encourage language development. Ten participants had identified children needing further support from other agencies, and nine were able to support caregivers to make appropriate referrals to access services and support.

Educators commented that the program helped them to understand children's individual strengths and needs, enriched their interactions with the children, and particularly helped quieter students express themselves more readily. They noted that some of the children, who were the focus in video feedback sessions due to their communication or interaction difficulties, were more engaged in conversation with the educators or their peers.

All educators invited to a follow-up meeting five months after the conclusion of the program confirmed they were continuing to use the strategies and were observing positive results in the children's use of language and their interactions with others. Participants reported they were able to build sustainability into their new learning by: making posters about the strategies to put on display within their centres, sharing their skills and 'coaching' other staff members who had not completed the enhanced *Teacher Talk™* program.