



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. What exactly is Small Talk?

A. Ames Public Library, Raising Readers in Story County, and Iowa State University have teamed up to offer Small Talk, an award winning parent education program. Small Talk is a series of free classes for parents of babies ages birth to 30 months, in which you'll learn simple strategies to talk, read, and sing more with your baby and help your baby's brain grow. There are 10 to 15 families in each class. Classes are held in various community settings.

Small Talk is also a research project. Dr. Constance Beecher, an assistant professor in Iowa State University's Department of Education, is the lead researcher. She wants to find out if offering parent education through a community program like Small Talk is effective. You'll learn much more about the research during orientation. To learn more now, see the informed consent.

A generous grant from an anonymous foundation, a grant from the LENA Research Foundation, and several smaller grants are supporting this three year pilot. The Ames Public Library Friends Foundation acts Small Talk's fiscal sponsor.

### Q. Small Talk classes are a 14 week commitment! That's a lot to ask of a busy family. Am I required to attend all 14 sessions?

A. In order to graduate, you need to:

- Attend or make-up the orientation session
- Attend or make-up the first 4 sessions
- Attend or make-up 5 of the remaining 9 sessions

We know you are busy, and that life happens! That's why we offer **flexible make-up sessions**. If you need to miss a session, just make arrangements to meet with your parent educator at a time that fits your schedule.

### Q. Okay, that helps. But that's still a big commitment. Is it really worth it?

A. Absolutely! In addition to the value of the class itself, you'll receive both **short term** and **long term** benefits.

In the **short term**, you and your kids will get a free healthy snack or meal and a free board book at every session. You'll get a well-deserved break while your baby is in childcare, and you'll enjoy the company and support of other parents. If you agree to participate in the research, you'll receive financial compensation as well.

But it's the **long term benefits** to your baby that are really important. Research shows that the skills you will learn in Small Talk classes may help your child:

- Have a larger vocabulary at age three and older
- Have higher levels of pre-literacy skills as a preschooler
- Have better academic and/or social emotional adjustment in kindergarten
- Be more likely to read at grade level in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- Have a reduced likelihood of being diagnosed with a disability or engaging in juvenile delinquency
- Be more likely to graduate from high school
- Be employed at a higher level as an adult

**Q. Why do you offer childcare? Can my baby attend class with me?**

A. Childcare is free, and is available for your baby and/or baby's older siblings. We offer childcare so that you can relax and concentrate in class.

Many of our participants assume that their baby will attend class with them. Small Talk classes are for parents; for our purposes, your baby does not need to come to class with you. You will learn new skills and techniques in class, but will practice them outside of class.

Care is provided by a childcare supervisor assisted by several trained volunteers. The supervisor and all volunteers have completed background checks. If you are comfortable leaving your child in childcare, he or she will receive a lot of quality attention and interaction!

Childcare typically takes place in a room adjacent to the room in which class is held. Childcare opens 30 minutes before class in order to smooth the transition for the children, while still allowing parents to make it to class on time.

Of course, we are a child-friendly group; your baby is welcome to attend class with you if that works best for your situation.

**Q. Are the classes taught in English? What if English isn't my native language?**

A. At this time, Small Talk classes are being taught in English, but non-native English speakers are welcome. You will benefit the most from Small Talk classes if you have basic competency in reading, speaking, and understanding English. You will be asked to read and complete several questionnaires in the course of the program, and will participate in large and small group discussions.

**Q. My child has a disability or developmental delay. Will Small Talk classes be helpful?**

A. Parents of any child ages birth to 30 months are welcome to participate. Please consider the following information as you decide whether or not to attend.

The curriculum is designed for parents of typically developing children. Although it is likely that you will learn important strategies and information designed to positively impact child development, the measure of your baby's development used in this program (the LENA Snapshot™) may not reflect your efforts, leading to disappointment. You may also face difficult feelings during large and small group discussions, if those discussions highlight your child's differences. With that in mind, the decision is yours. If you decide to attend, program staff will do our best to support you.

**Q. My baby is due soon after classes start. May I attend this session?**

A. Your baby must be born before you will be eligible to attend Small Talk classes. We'd be happy to take your email address and notify you when the next series of classes is scheduled.

**Other questions? Feel free to contact us:**

smalltalk@amespubliclibrary.org  
(515)239-5673



**SMALL TALK STORY COUNTY MADE POSSIBLE BY:**

