

Pathways to Quality

Think Small ParentPowered Texts



► Project Description



Think Small, in partnership with ParentPowered, implemented a text-based program in Minnesota in 2017. This program is based on the research of Benjamin York and Susanna Loeb (One Step at a Time: The Effects of an Early Literacy Text Messaging Program for Parents of Preschoolers). This study found that the texting program had a positive effect on parent engagement in home literacy activities with their children, as well as parental involvement at school. Increased parental activity at home and school correlated with student learning gains in some areas of early literacy.



Think Small's implementation of this program aligns with the desired result of our strategic plan on Parent Engagement: ensuring parents and caregivers are engaged in supporting and preparing their children for kindergarten. Texting services also have the benefit of a 95% open rate—meaning families are more likely to engage with the information than they would through another medium like email.

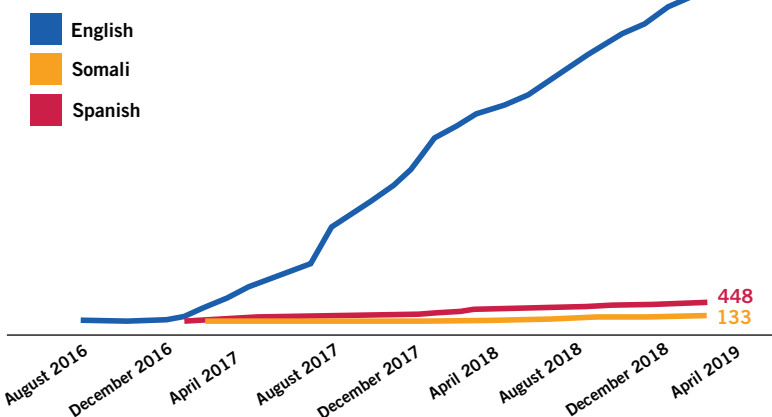
To ensure this program would meet the needs of families, Think Small piloted three distinct services with parents, and parents overwhelmingly preferred the ParentPowered texting service. ParentPowered was developed using research from Stanford University and is aligned with the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS). Free, age-targeted texts for children birth through eight years old are sent with actionable messages to parents and early childhood providers who sign up to receive them. Three weekly text messages (in English, Spanish, or Somali) contain a fact to inform and motivate, a tip with a fun adult-child learning activity, and a growth message that reinforces and extends the week's theme.

► Impact

As of May 2019, there are about 8,400 people signed up to receive the weekly messages. Think Small works with a continuously growing number of organization and is currently working with over 425 partners around the state to invite parents and caregivers to sign up for texts. Our model is to partner with organizations that have trusted relationships with parents and caregivers to sign them up for the program. Our partners include large school districts, county libraries, homeless shelters, and family child care providers.

While we are working with ParentPowered to develop an evaluation for the texting program, we are hearing great responses from parents and caregivers on how much they enjoy and use the texts they receive each week.

Language of Enrollees



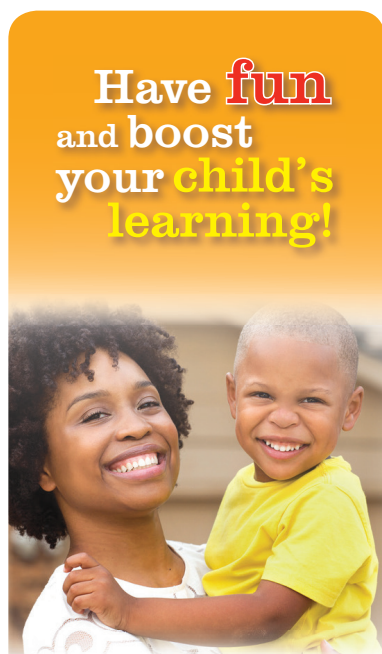
“ I like that [the texts are] making me focus on my son and our relationship but also knowing it has these long-term effects.” ”
—MARY TEXADOR



► Ability to Scale

Think Small texting is a very scalable program, and we have started to roll it out across the state of Minnesota. Think Small texts has begun As part of the Little Moments Count campaign spearheaded by HealthPartners, Think Small has partnered with Reach Out and Read to scale the texting program.

Working with ParentPowered, we have identified some Minnesota-specific needs, such as adding a translation in Somali, and we are working with our partners on specialized texting to targeted groups. We partnered with Minnesota Comeback to develop specialized texts for parents of children in kindergarten. These texts gave specific information on how to choose the right school for their child. Of those parents that received a text, 30% of them opened to get more information.



► Next Steps

We are currently working on developing and implementing a scalable model of texting. This will include an evaluation component and an expanded goal of using texting to aid in kindergarten transition. Think Small is looking for a funding investment of \$30,000 per year to help ensure any family can participate and to continue to market this program to families.



Text TS to 70138

To learn more about Pathways to Quality, visit ThinkSmall.org/pathways