

# Defining Equity in Early Language Learning from a Community Prevention Perspective

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## Introduction

### The Problem

- We know that inequities exist in children's language learning opportunities, particularly among those experiencing the stresses of poverty (Hart & Risley, 1995).
- 16 Million children in the United States (birth to 3) grow up in significant poverty (Child Trends, 2019), most are African American and Hispanic/Latinx.
- We define equity in early language learning opportunity in terms of increasing the prevalence of rich language environments for all children.

### Solution

- A practical ecological intervention impacting all children/parents in a community simultaneously.
- Bridging the Word Gap Community Action Planning Guide (BWG-CAPG), is a multisectoral community partnership with a mission to promote early language and improve school readiness.

**Purpose.** To develop the needed capacity and conduct a pilot intervention study

### Research Questions

- What capacity building activities, products, and tools were the outcomes in support of the BWG community initiative?
- To what extent were the BWG initiative's actions implemented?
- What changes occurred in BWG practices, programs, and policies?

## Method

**Participants** One community & three sectors:

- Pediatric Health (12 nurses in one hospital and 62 newborns)
- Childcare (3 Centers, 14 teachers, and 34 children)
- R&E Team (5 PhD researchers, 1 assistant, 2 RAs)

**Measurement** The online BWG Community Checkbox Evaluation system.

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## A community-wide multisector intervention holds promise in building equity in young children's language learning opportunities and school readiness.



### Procedures

Combination evidence-based interventions were simultaneously implemented within and across community sectors over 21 months creating multiple intervention effects as compared to only one single intervention in one sector. Thus, anywhere a child is in a community, their language acquisition is supported.

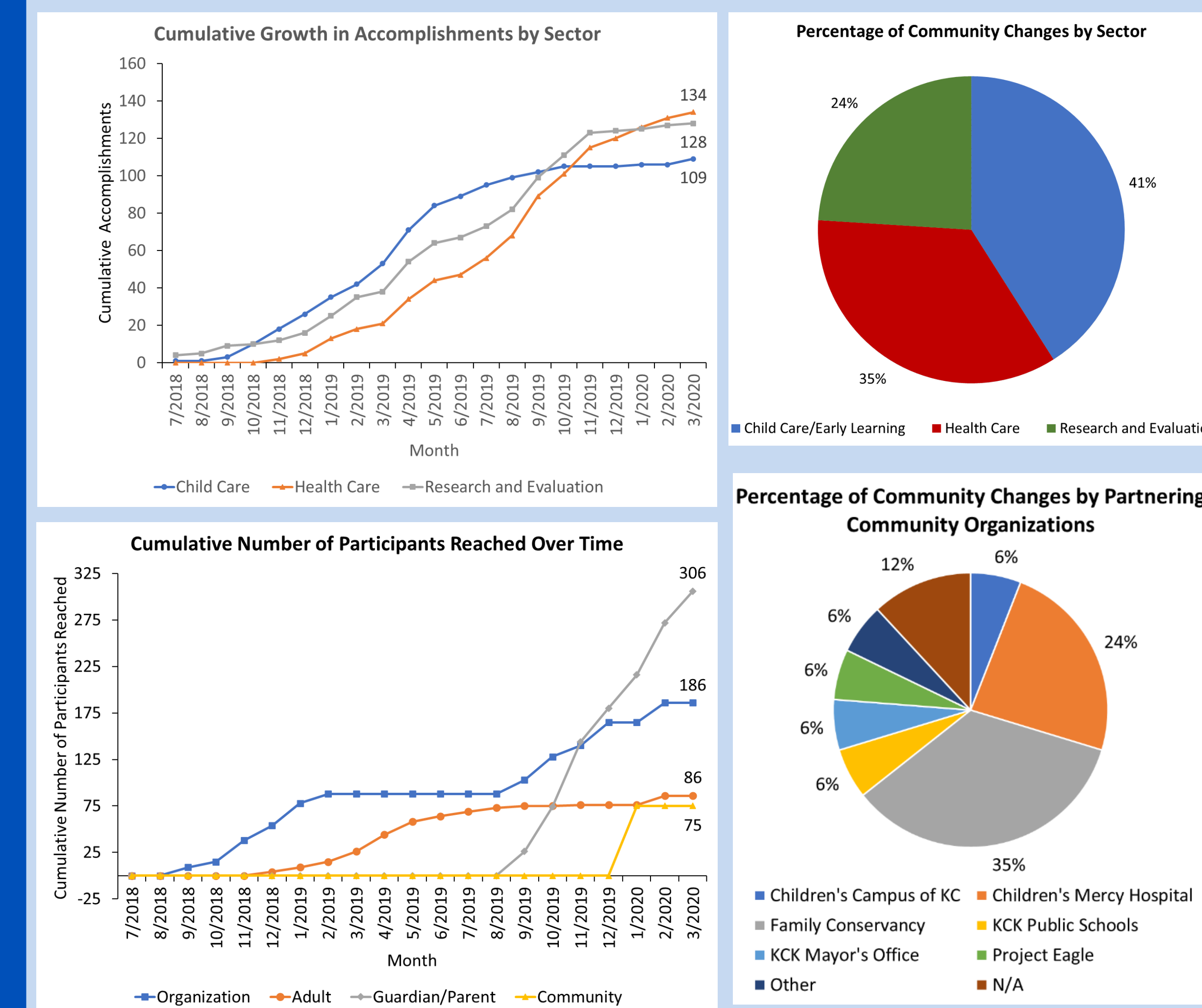
### Interventions

- Community Level-Multisectoral Partnership, the BWG-CAPG
- Child-Family Level:
  - Talk With Me Baby! In Pediatric Practice (<https://www.talkwithmebaby.org/>)
  - LENA Grow in Child Care (<https://www.lena.org/lena-grow/>)

## Results

- Established the capacity, mobilization, and activities needed in a community effort (i.e., Guide, Check Box, Media)
- Documented 371 total community BWB actions: Pediatric Health Care [134], R & E [128], and Child Care [109])
- Community changes were made in practices, programs, and policies

## Results (Continu.)



## Discussion

- Recap.** The BWG-CAPG intervention was measurably effective in producing desired actions and changes in 3 sectors of 1 community.
- While promising, future research is needed including more sectors in the intervention and measures of child-family reach, language environment improvements, and children's language outcomes.
- Significance** The BWG-CAPG has replication potential by other communities improving equity in children's learning opportunities, language outcomes
- Policymakers, program directors, and community leaders should consider the approach and support further research and development.
- Reference**

Greenwood, C. R., Carta, J. J., Schnitz, A. G., Walker, D., Gabriel, D., Thompson, V., & Watson-Thompson, J. (2021). Progress toward a multisectoral community intervention approach to prevention of the Word Gap. *Behavior and Social Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-021-00074-y>

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