

## **Bridging the Word Gap Network: Early Literacy and Language Development**

The **Bridging the Word Gap Network** is a national network of experts in language and literacy development that will address the “30 million word gap” difference in the number of words that some children from poverty backgrounds hear by age 4 compared with the experiences of other more affluent children. The Network, funded by a two-year grant of \$593,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services, will be headed by University of Kansas faculty Judith Carta, Charles Greenwood, and Dale Walker.

The Network is part of the larger Bridging the Word Gap effort endorsed by the White House and coordinated by the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



The network is comprised of an interdisciplinary group of distinguished scientists selected because of their expertise in carrying out intervention research that has made a difference in the lives of young children and their families in poverty. **Howard Goldstein**, Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, University of South Florida will be leading one of the six workgroups. Dr. Goldstein's research focuses on improving the communication and social skills of children with and at risk for developmental disabilities.

Currently the Vice President for Science and Research for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Dr. Goldstein's recent work seeks to enhance the language and literacy development of students in high poverty schools who are at high risk for language and reading disabilities. Dr. Goldstein sees this Network as an incredibly important advancement in the national movement to increase literacy in young children who may not be exposed to larger vocabularies. “We know that children's language sophistication is highly related to what they hear. We need to figure out how to enhance the home language environment, because it is the key to academic achievement and life success.”

For more information about early literacy and language work and the Dr. Goldstein's Center for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood at USF, contact him at [hgoldstein@usf.edu](mailto:hgoldstein@usf.edu). For more information about the Bridging the Word Gap Network, contact Dr. Judith Carta ([carta@ku.edu](mailto:carta@ku.edu)), Dr. Charles Greenwood ([greenwood@ku.edu](mailto:greenwood@ku.edu)), or Dr. Dale Walker ([walkerd@ku.edu](mailto:walkerd@ku.edu)) at the University of Kansas.