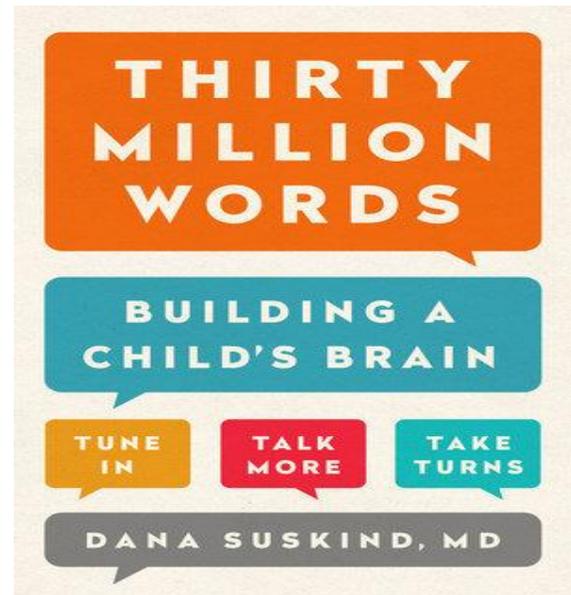


May 4, 2016

*Spotlight on Books*

*Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain* by Dana Suskind

Professor Dana Suskind, MD, began her career as a pediatric cochlear implant surgeon providing deaf children with the gift of hearing. The first surgery was carried out in 1984 and this procedure coupled with universal hearing screening for newborns made it possible for the first time for children born deaf to function in the hearing world.



However, as miraculous as the surgery was, Suskind observed and puzzled over the fact that while children who had this surgery could indeed recover their hearing, tracking of post-surgical results made it clear that results were extremely variable. The author's "aha" moment occurred when she began to realize that while the implant surgery is a significant tool, without exposure to a rich and robust language environment the child will lag.

The author's further research into the neural plasticity of the brain and the role that "parent talk" plays in child development led Suskind to found the *Thirty Million Words* initiative and she dedicates this book to those children who are at risk for floundering and failure if their parents don't possess a vocabulary of thirty million words and the determination to communicate with their children. A "common sense" topic that is backed up here by definitive research demonstrating that literacy levels, indeed life success, are dependent to a great extent on parental ability and willingness to "tune in, talk more and take turns".

Suskind shares, for example, that a child's vocabulary by the age of three is predictive of his third grade reading ability. As well, the author believes that this basic human-to-human interaction cannot be replicated by a digital interface and provides a wealth of suggestions for parents eager to foster this human connection with their children.

*Thirty Million Words* is a perfect gift for expectant parents. It is written with passion coupled with an underlying conviction that sometimes the best gifts are free! Yellowknife Public Library has created a small display in support of *Speech and Hearing Month* in Canada and this fine book is available for checkout from here.

- *Review prepared by Deborah Bruser*