

Groundbreaking Research in Education presented in Needham
By the Language Diversity and Literacy Development Team,
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Sponsored by the Needham Education Foundation

Needham, Mass. – January 14, 2010 - The Needham Education Foundation (NEF) is bringing groundbreaking research in children's education to the Needham community on **Wednesday evening, February 24, 2010.**

"Let's Talk: Keys to Your Child's Academic Success," will be presented by Harvard Associate Professor Nonie Lesaux and members of her research group. For her trailblazing work, President Obama bestowed the prestigious Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) upon Lesaux in July 2009.

Dr. Lesaux will focus on the critical importance of higher level vocabulary and dialogue in children's education, presenting results from a large-scale study of middle school students in San Diego, California. Analysis of the data from year one of the study is soon to be published in the top reading research journal, *Reading Research Quarterly*. Lesaux and her colleagues, Perla Gamez and Joan Kelley, will present these findings as well as the latest information from year two, highlighting the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading achievement, and discussing how the results support the need to build children's vocabulary at home and at school.

The NEF requests those interested in attending, RSVP to info@nefneedham.org by February 17, 2010. Admission is free and the program will run from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in Milas Hall at the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering. Light refreshments will be served before the discussion and a question and answer session will follow.

Lesaux, Gamez and Kelley will explain that encouraging your children to read is essential, but it is only a piece of the academic puzzle. Their research concludes that children need exposure to academic vocabulary and practice using academic words in order to read and understand middle school and high school textbooks, and ultimately achieve in school.

"Challenging our children with rich dialogue is integral to their school success," said Lesaux. "My research team is going to address what constitutes the kind of dialogue that has an impact on children's learning, and how parents and caregivers can infuse meaningful, educational conversation in today's fast-paced family lifestyles.

"For example, we've all heard we need to have dinner as a family but what needs to take place while we're sitting at the table together? Our discussion will offer ideas for having conversations with your children that will have them thinking about new concepts and ideas they've never contemplated before. With innovative thinking comes higher level vocabulary and comprehension that then crosses over into children's studies."

“This is the first time that NEF has sponsored this kind of event,” said Frank Fortin, co-president of the NEF. “It is rare for professionals of this caliber to present their research to the general public and even more unusual for this research to be shared before publication.”

Harvard Graduate School of Education Dean Kathleen McCartney has said Lesaux’s work is “already changing education policy in the United States, and making an impact on the training of many education professionals.”

About The Needham Education Foundation

The Needham Education Foundation was founded by the Needham High School Class of 1939, to enhance and enrich the education of children in the Needham Public Schools. The NEF funds programs that promote innovation and excellence from pre-kindergarten through high school, for projects that are outside normal and expected public funding. For almost two decades, the NEF has supported more than 250 grants worth more than \$1 million. For more information, visit www.nefneedham.org.

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