

RIDDLL LAB

Newsletter

Winter 2024

The Research in Developmental Disabilities and Language (RIDDLL) Lab would like to wish you a happy new year this 2024! There are many exciting developments in the lab, including new grants funded by the National Institutes of Health, new lab members, and noteworthy publications!

As always, a huge thank you to all of the families who continue to support our lab and participate in our studies by traveling to the Waisman Center. We would be nothing without you and your generous time and effort.

If you are interested in the work we are doing or would like more information on how to get involved, please reach out to us at: riddll@waisman.wisc.edu, visit our website, <https://riddll.waisman.wisc.edu>, or follow us on Facebook at the Research in Developmental Disabilities Language Lab.

What's in this newsletter:

- New Studies
- Lab Member Spotlights
- Summaries of Recent Findings



Check out our new logo! We wanted to update our old logo to capture our friendly lab environment and play into our lab name.

Here's a "RIDDLL" for you: What begins with an "E" and only contains one letter? (Find the answer at the bottom of the last page!)

NEW PROJECTS

If you are a parent of a child ages two to five years with Down syndrome, you are invited to participate in our TOMI project! Our study aims to learn more about how language samples collected in the home can be used to measure language development in children with Down syndrome. If you decide to participate, you and your child will complete self-recorded audio and video observations in your home at two time points, one month apart. We will also come to your home to conduct tests with your child to measure their problem-solving and language skills. At each time point, you will receive \$75 for your participation, for a total of \$150.

If you are interested, please contact Marianne Elmquist at riddll@waisman.wisc.edu.



The lab will soon start recruiting for a new study on language and executive function in 8–12-year-old autistic girls and girls with fragile X syndrome.

If you're interested in learning more, contact Susen Schroeder at riddll@waisman.wisc.edu

LAB MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



Amy Banasik

Speech-Language Pathologist
Researcher

Amy received her master's degree in speech-language pathology from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She completed her clinical training at the UC Davis MIND Institute. Amy's previous research experience focused on language development in children and adolescents with neurodevelopmental disorders including autism spectrum disorder, fragile X syndrome, and Down syndrome, with a special interest in developing parent-implemented language interventions.

Alexia Bales

First-Year MS-SLP Student

Alexia is a first-year graduate student studying speech-language pathology. She graduated from UW Madison in 2023 with degrees in Communication Sciences and Disorders, and Health Promotion and Health Equity. She is interested in child development, specifically language development in children with disabilities. In her free time, she enjoys playing with her family dog, snow water skiing, and exploring everything Madison has to offer.



SUMMARIES OF RECENT FINDINGS

Book Reading with Kids with Down syndrome

Elizabeth Hilvert and colleagues looked at differences in how mothers and fathers read children's books to their 2-5 year olds with Down syndrome.

The study found that mothers were more talkative and used more descriptive language, and fathers spent more time reading the books' text. Mothers' and fathers' input was correlated with different measures of child language, suggesting that mothers and fathers may use different approaches to support language development.

Citation: Hilvert, E., Lorang, E., Maltman, N., & Sterling, A. (2022). Assessing the Quantity and Quality of Language Used by Mothers and Fathers of Children with Down Syndrome During Shared Book Reading. *Journal of Child Language*, 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000922000046>



Measuring Pragmatic Language in Autism and Fragile X Syndrome

Nell Maltman and colleagues looked at how we measure pragmatic language in autism and fragile X syndrome (FXS). Pragmatic language is the social use of language. Pragmatics are impaired in autism and often impaired in FXS.

Results indicate that boys with ASD + FXS may struggle more with pragmatic language based on environmental factors, such as length of assessment and amount of activity structure.

Citation: Maltman, N., Willer, R., & Sterling, A. (2023). An Exploratory Study of Pragmatic Language Use Across Contexts With the Pragmatic Rating Scale–School Age Among Autistic Boys and Boys With Fragile X Syndrome Plus Autism. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 66(11), 4547–4557. https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_JSLHR-23-00024

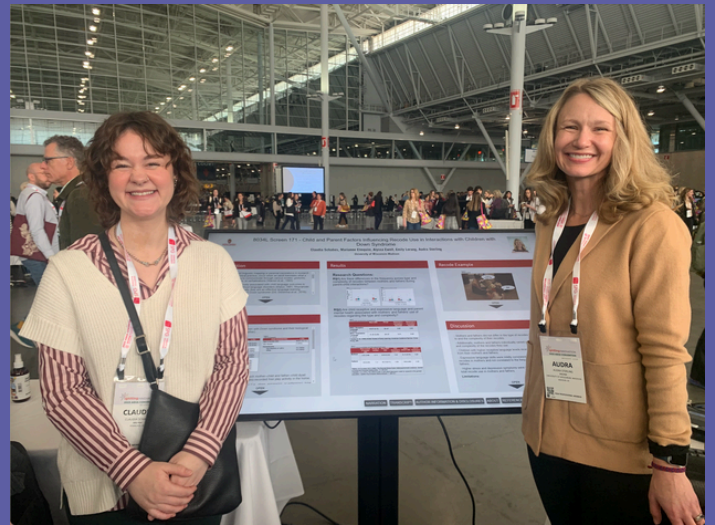


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The lab has been to lots of events this past year! Check out all the places we've been to recruit, share our research, or volunteer to support our research community!



Audra, Claudia, Alyssa, and Amy at a Wisconsin American Speech Language and Hearing conference on developmental language disorder.



Claudia and Audra at the American Speech Language and Hearing Association Annual Conference in Boston.



Latifa, Claudia, Alyssa, and Jessi at the Waisman Whirl.



Claudia, Alyssa, and Amy at the GiGi's Playhouse Holiday Party.

WHO'S IN THE LAB?

We've grown in the past year! Meet some new folks (names underlined), see some familiar names, and celebrate our lab alumni who have gone on to amazing new positions.

Audra Sterling: Lab Director

Susen Schroeder: Lab Manager

Marianne Elmquist: Research Scientist

Amy Banasik: Speech-Language Pathologist Researcher (see lab member spotlight!)

Claudia Schabes: Clinical Fellow/Research Intern

Tiffany Chavers-Edgar: Post-doctoral Researcher

Latifatu Mohammed: PhD Student

Alyssa Ewell: Second-year MS-SLP/PhD Student

Kaylee Commet: Second-year MS-SLP Student

Alexia Bales: First-year MS-SLP Student (see lab member spotlight!)

Jessi Ryan: First-year MS-SLP Student

Ellie Engels: Undergraduate Student

Bailey Finch: Undergraduate Student

Grace Geyso: Undergraduate Student

Danny Variano: Undergraduate Student

Grace Wanzong: Undergraduate Student

Recent Lab Alumni



Nell Maltman
Assistant Professor at the
University of Arizona
Lifespan Language Lab



Kelsey Reis
Speech-Language
Pathologist at KGH Autism
Services