

Program Overview

Why focus on early talk?

From birth, a child has about 2,000 days before they start kindergarten. On each of those 2,000 days, tens of billions of new neural connections are forming. That's 2,000 days for the adults in a child's life to nurture brain development and to help set the child up for the best life possible.

Those adults — even the ones who care for children professionally — may not realize just how important conversational turns are for children's growing brains.

A conversational turn is such a simple thing — just a back-and-forth exchange, a serve-and-return interaction, between an adult and a child.

Conversational turns are a vital ingredient in the kinds of things that are fundamental to being human in general — think development of communication, social skills, and brain function.

And they're a vital ingredient to succeeding in school— think kindergarten readiness, third grade reading skills, and middle school IQ score.

Those are all very big things, big enough to make an individual caregiver feel powerless. In reality, though, all those very big things come back to a single starting point: just one adult making a connection with one child through a conversational turn.

LENA Grow is designed to help early childhood educators increase interactive talk and improve early language environments — all without burdening their schedules or distracting from their care of the children. The first 2,000 days are so important. Spending 90 of them with LENA Grow can make a world of difference.

Find out more

Conversational turns are linked to:

- Brain structure. [Read more!](#)
- Brain function. [Read more!](#)
- Reading skills. [Read more!](#)
- IQ scores. [Read more!](#)
- Socioemotional development. [Read more!](#)
- Language, executive functioning, and reasoning scores. [Read more!](#)



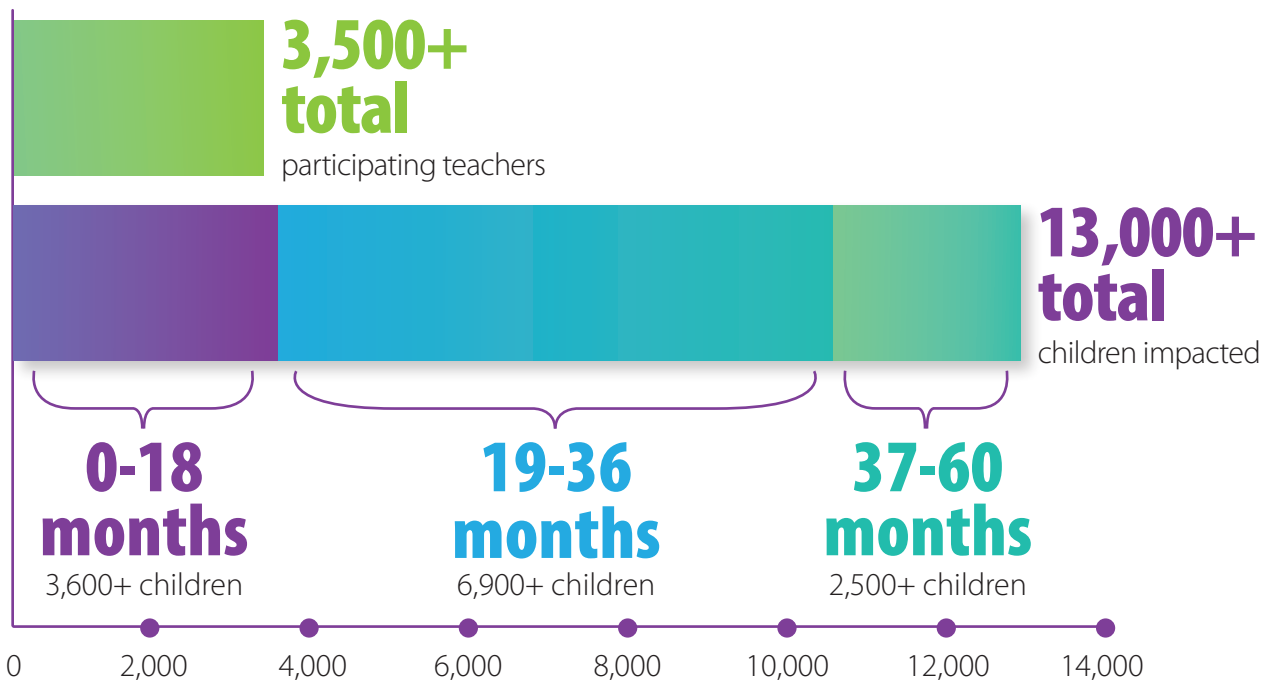
About LENA Grow

LENA Grow is an innovative, research-based, job-embedded professional development program designed to help infant, toddler, and preschool teachers measurably improve language environments, overall and for each individual child.

The program teaches caregivers the power of the conversational turn. It employs LENA's "talk pedometer" technology, concise strengths-based coaching, and data-rich reference materials to help teachers build more talk into their daily activities.

Who uses LENA Grow?

Since 2017, over 13,000 children across the United States, as well as Australia and New Zealand, have been directly impacted by LENA Grow. The program helps teachers develop lasting skills, so the true impact grows with every passing year.



Early childhood education is an intricate web. For each strand on that web, LENA Grow is both highly adaptable and easily scalable. What kinds of organizations partner with LENA to bring LENA Grow to their communities?



Child Care Resource and Referral services (CCR&Rs).
[Read more!](#)



Family child care providers.
[Read more!](#)



Head Start and Early Head Start organizations.
[Read more!](#)



School districts.
[Read more!](#)



State agencies and regional organizations.
[Read more!](#)



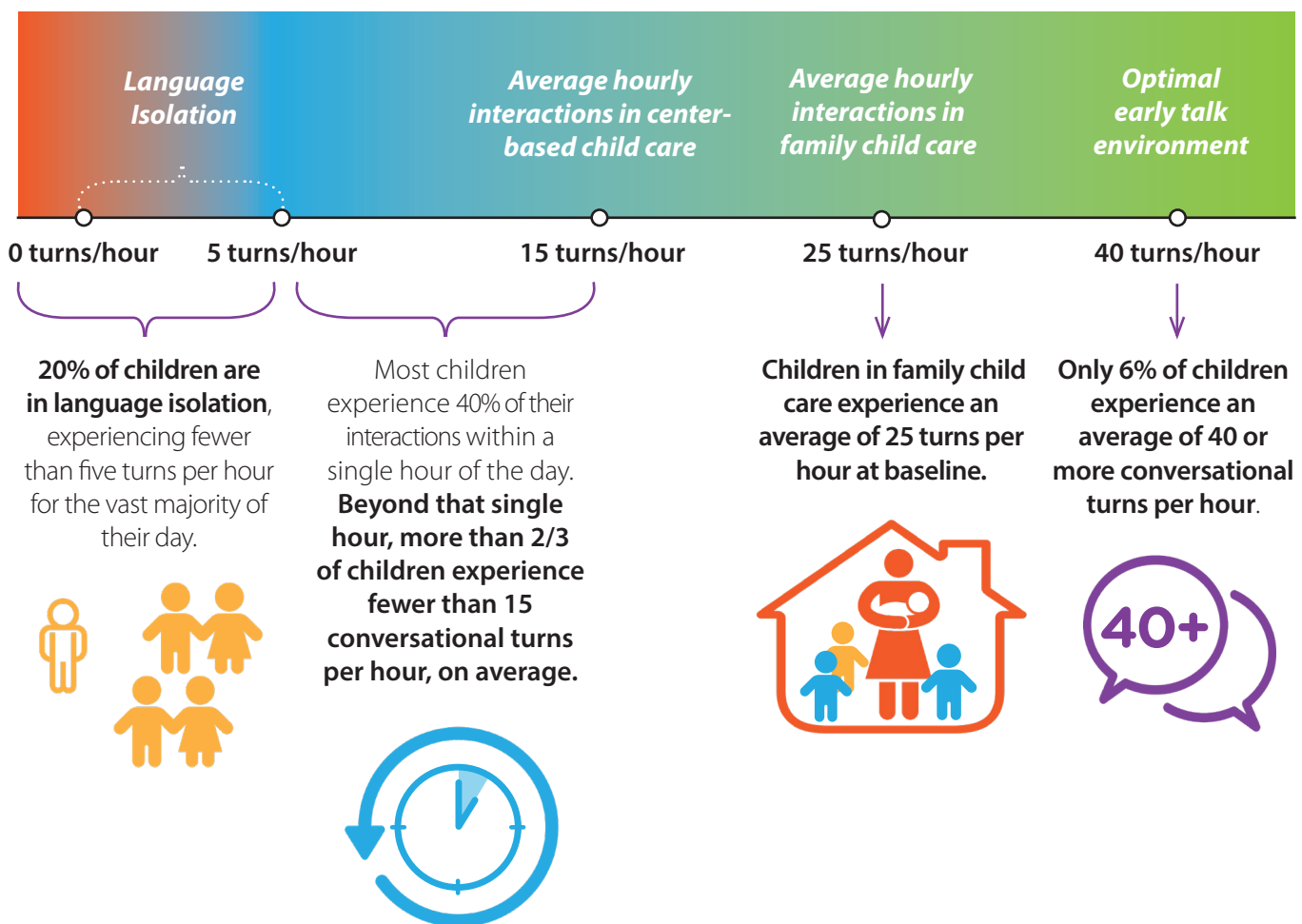
University-community partnerships.
[Read more!](#)

The need for LENA Grow

Improving early talk environments is among the easiest and most cost-effective ways to improve children's futures, yet research shows that children in child care settings:

- Experience the fewest conversational turns in the very age range (18-24 months) when they matter most. According to [peer-reviewed research](#), this is the age range when language environments are most predictive of long-term outcomes.
- Experience wide variability in interaction — meaning some children spend large portions of their day in language isolation, even in classrooms where other children are experiencing a high number of conversational turns.

And yet there's good reason to be hopeful. Incremental improvements in language environments can pay enormous dividends.



Every increase of two conversational turns per hour has a statistically significant impact up to 40 turns, and is associated with a one-point increase in Full Scale IQ 10 years down the line.

The case for urgency

Are there systemic challenges influencing the quality and equity of child care environments? Yes.

Should we wait for those challenges to be addressed through policy resolutions before acting? No, that's time that today's young children do not have.

With many children spending as much as 60% of their waking time in early care and learning settings, increasing talk in early childhood classrooms is essential right now. LENA Grow can deliver these results in just three months.

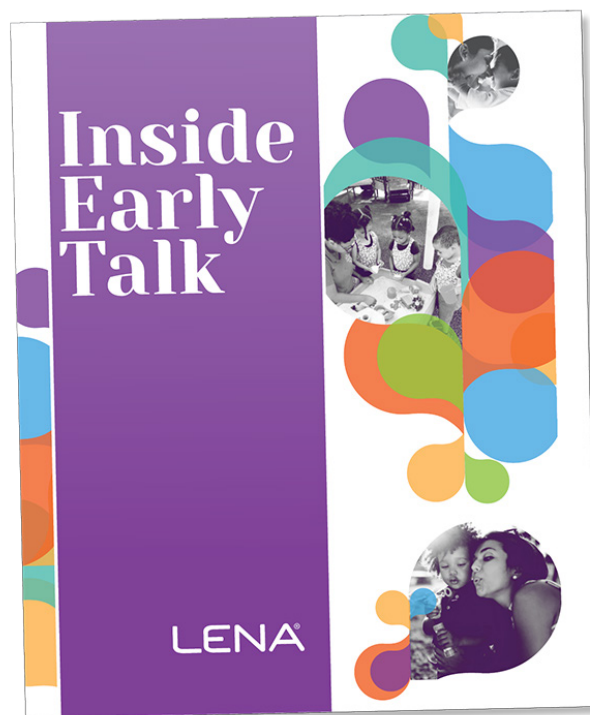
We need immediate interventions, ones that recognize early childhood teachers as an underserved, underappreciated, and imminently powerful resource for change. LENA Grow is a proven program whose benefits come quickly — for individual children and entire communities alike.

At LENA, we emphatically believe three things:

1. Early talk is key.
2. Parents and caregivers are the secret sauce.
3. You can't improve what you don't measure.

Find out more

Read about early language environments in child care settings in LENA's [Inside Early Talk report](#) and learn more about LENA Grow at LENA.org/LENA-grow.



Read on!



Program Impact

Increasing teacher satisfaction and confidence

After completing LENA Grow, **91% of teachers** report increased job satisfaction and confidence in their abilities, and 99% would recommend the program to other teachers.

Why? Because the program involves them as active participants in their own professional growth.

LENA Grow is designed to deliver insights into language environments without putting any extra burdens on them. The program simply asks teachers to carry on with their normal daily routines and to participate in brief coaching sessions.

Facilitating collaboration at every level

For leaders at the state, county, and municipal level, LENA Grow offers:

- An easily scalable professional development program with proven results.
- An effective means of addressing achievement gaps and boosting kindergarten readiness.

For center directors, LENA Grow offers:

- Insights into the language environments of individual rooms and individual children.
- Opportunities to increase parent and family engagement. 77% of teachers say that LENA Grow increased their communication with parents.
- A means of reducing staff turnover, as teachers feel more valued in and inspired by their role.

For coaches, LENA Grow offers:

- A framework for collaborative discussions around teachers' perceptions. 93% of coaches report that LENA Grow changed their relationship with teachers.
- The freedom to personalize their approaches for each teacher, as afforded by ready-made curriculum materials.
- A novel approach to setting goals by interpreting data reports.

For teachers, LENA Grow offers:

- Increased knowledge about the importance of responsive language interaction.
- Techniques for increasing quality interactions with the children in their care.
- Recognition of and pride in the vital role they play in early brain development.

Find out more

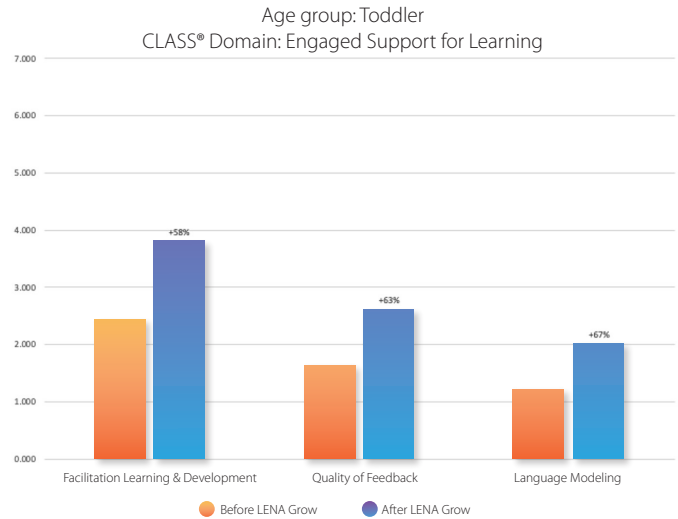
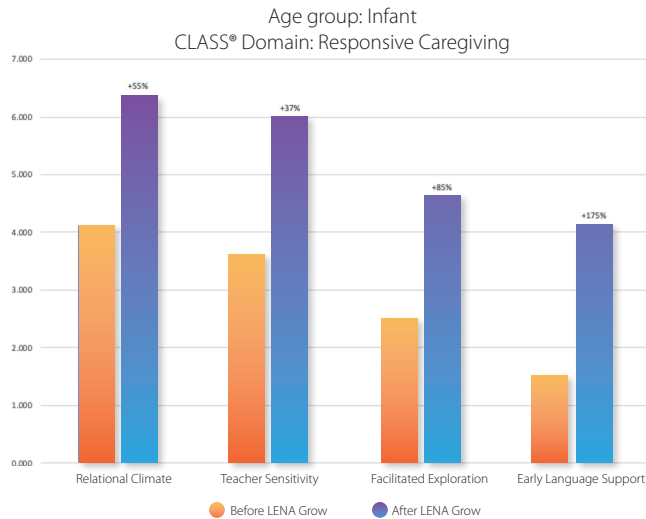
Watch a video about [a teacher at the Coalition for the Homeless](#) in Orlando, Fla., who participated in LENA Grow.

Improving CLASS® scores

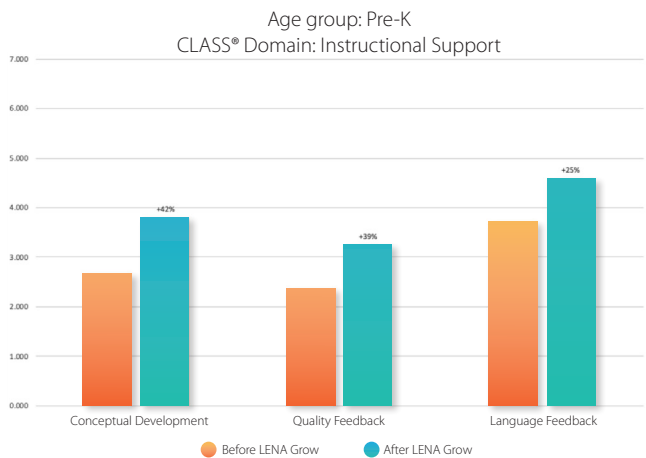
Increasing teacher satisfaction and confidence can lead to great things.

Moving the needle on CLASS® scores is no easy feat. However, there’s growing evidence that LENA Grow does just that — especially within the domain of instructional support, where high scores are particularly difficult to achieve.

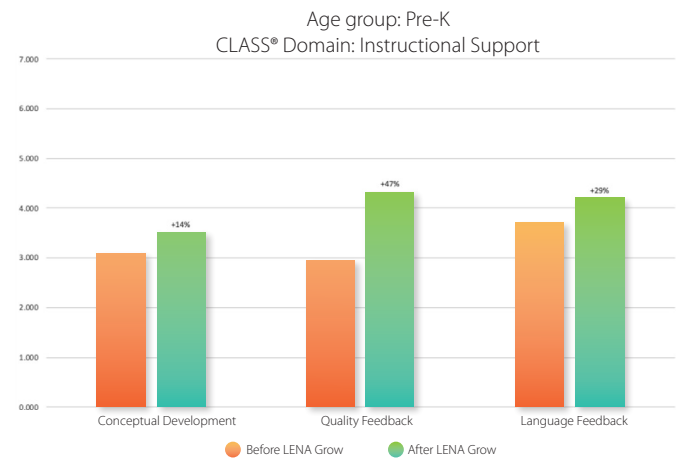
- The Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County, Fla., raised its infant classroom Responsive Caregiving composite scores by 80%, from 2.94 to 5.28, and its toddler classroom Engaged Support for Learning composite scores by 62%, from 1.73 to 2.80. [Read more!](#)



- The Fort Worth Independent School District, Texas, raised its Instructional Support composite scores in pre-K classrooms by 30%, from 3.08 to 4.00. [Read more!](#)



- The Primary School in Palo Alto, Calif., raised its Instructional Support pre-K classrooms by 34%, from 2.89 to 3.87. [Read more!](#)



“Because the LENA Grow reports provided instant results that teachers could see, they gained more of an understanding of some of the CLASS dimensions and indicators. So teachers gained a better understanding of what a high-quality, interactive classroom looks like.”

— Lisa Austin, Early Childhood Specialist at Fort Worth Children’s Partnership

Improving outcomes across the board

It's not just CLASS® scores. Individual child assessments from LENA Grow classrooms show that conversational turns and positive benefits go hand in hand.

In Florida, the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County saw dramatic improvements in TS Gold® scores. Of the children who started the program below “widely held expectations” (WHE), 50% moved to meeting or exceeding WHE at the end of the program. Those children experienced the greatest average increases in conversational turns of nearly 25 turns per hour. [Read more!](#)



Interaction

Children who started out receiving fewer than average interactions were experiencing

52% more back-and-forth conversations

by the end of the program.



Equity

Children who were experiencing the least amount of talk saw even greater gains, benefiting from a

75% increase in interactions.

Researchers at the University of Kansas used the Early Communication Indicator (ECI) to measure the program's effectiveness in infant and toddler classrooms. At baseline, 29% of children whose teachers participated in LENA Grow were “on track” in language abilities. At a six-month evaluation, 82% of those children were on track. There was no change in a comparison group whose teachers did not participate in LENA Grow. [Read more!](#)

What state leaders, directors, coaches, and teachers are saying

It became clear that the fit of LENA Grow was perfect for us. Our values encourage us first to value infant/toddler early care educators. This model says ‘You caregivers, what you’re already doing in your day, you’re doing it – we just want to put words and numbers around it and give it back to you in a way that’s readable.’

— Lisa Matter, program manager with Colorado's Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care initiative — [Read more!](#)

Quality adult-child interactions are critical for early childhood development, so adding LENA Grow to what we're already doing to foster early language and literacy is an exciting next step for us!

— Linda Swedhin, Director of the Aspen Center for Child Development, Longmont, Colo.

I've been coaching a long time. To have a different direction, to have it be so data-driven, has been just a different approach for me. It's been really exciting.

— Kathy Cestaro, a coach with the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Fl. — [Read more!](#)

This program was way more hands-on than other professional development programs we've done. Usually PD is just someone talking to us and telling us things that they know. But with LENA Grow, the teachers got to be more a part of it. We got to be really involved.

— Ashley Ramos, a teacher with Sequatchie Valley Head Start, Tenn. — [Read more!](#)

LENA®

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