

# The LENA Home Program

During a child's first three years, talk is one of the most critical factors driving brain growth and kindergarten readiness. Low levels of adult-child verbal interaction in these earliest years are a key reason many children aren't ready for school.

LENA Home is designed to add an early-language focus to existing home visiting or parent education programs serving children in this critical window. It employs LENA technology and targeted home visiting content to help parents and caregivers increase interactive talk.

The unique use of **measurable feedback** helps parents apply strategies, refine learning through data analysis, and guides them through the goal setting/joint planning process. This coaching cycle promotes capacity through continuous reflection and refinement resulting in measurable growth in adult behavior and child language development outcomes.

The **LENA Home curriculum** provides home visitors the platform to facilitate the Five Key Characteristics of Coaching (Rush & Shelden, 2005):



## What is LENA?



Rush, D., & Shelden, M. (2005). Evidence-Based Definition of Coaching Practices. CASEinPoint, 1(6).

# LENA®

Building brains through early talk

# A Window into the Home: Using Data to Enhance Impacts of Home Visits

By Laura Camp - LENA

## Case Study: Cherokee County School District



Current home visiting strategies share the goal of preparing young children for success in life, but they vary in structure, implementation, data collection, and evaluation. The "Talk to Me" partnership, implemented in Cherokee County, SC, set out to determine the impacts of the LENA Home program's language development-focused curriculum emphasizing the key features of providing caregivers with objective feedback, joint data analysis, and goal setting.

### Implementation structure:

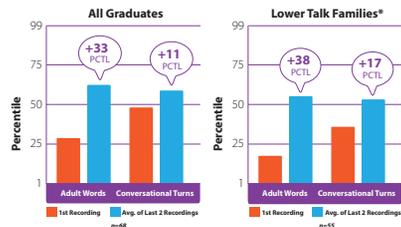
- Year 1: 13 bi-weekly visits using LENA Home as a stand-alone curriculum
- Years 2 & 3: 13 weekly visits using LENA Home as a stand-alone curriculum

### Home visits lasted approximately 45 minutes each, and included the following components:

- Data co-discovery and reflection using LENA reports
- Introduction of new language enrichment strategies, built around LENA's 14 Talking Tips
- Strategy review, modeling, and practice
- Goal setting using joint planning

### Measurable program evaluation components:

- Increases in adult words spoken to target child
- Increases in conversational turns between adult caregivers and target child
- Language development for target children ages 0 to 36 months -
  - Are gaps identified between their chronological age and developmental age?
  - Are gaps closed through accelerated language development?



\*Families were considered part of the "lower talk" group if either words or turns on the first recording fell below the 50th percentile. For Cherokee County, this represented eighty-one percent of families.

## Lessons Learned

Parents/caregivers made significant gains in adult words and conversational turns. The larger observed change in adult words than conversational turns is not surprising and is consistent with results observed in other LENA Home sites. Research indicates it is easier for parents to initially boost adult word counts, while increasing turns take higher skill and more effort, so those changes tend to lag the changes in word count. For this reason, "Talk to Me" implements the full 13 weeks of LENA Home although only 9 weeks are required for program completion.

Additional anonymous parent survey data demonstrated that participating parents/caregivers learned and applied the language and literacy strategies and behaviors taught throughout the LENA Home program. Overall, program funders, stakeholders, and implementers met their goal of increased and sustained adult behavior change in the area of interactive talk and program funding continues for the third consecutive year.

Future reading deficits begin in infancy and waiting until students fall is too late. The success of this program is important for South Carolina communities as the state now retains 3rd grade students based on reading skills. The "Talk to Me" partnership represents

a community-wide commitment to students and families by measuring and addressing these early deficits to provide effective intervention during the most critical window for brain growth. Cherokee County School District plans to continue their program and will analyze school readiness data of participating children in comparison to their peers whose parents did not participate in the LENA Home program.

### Criteria to consider when integrating new programs into existing home visiting initiatives:

While the community in this case study implemented LENA Home as a stand-alone home visiting program, the curriculum is designed for flexibility and can be layered into already existing home visiting programs. Criteria to consider when planning to add LENA Home should include:

- How will the individual parent data strengthen our relationship with each family?
- How will the use of objective data improve our overall program outcomes?
- How will the program outcome data provide transparent reporting to key stakeholders and funders?
- How will we use this data for continued program refinement?

## Technology in Home Visiting

Home visitors report that the combination of technology-assisted feedback and face-to-face coaching sessions resulted in a powerful parent engagement model.

Parents had some initial concerns about having their child wear a LENA device and what their reports would show. However, once parents received their first report, they were hooked:



"While families seemed receptive to the strategies I shared, it was the actual reports that made all the difference! They wanted to see their results on paper - and they wanted their reports as soon as I arrived. Parents could even predict how they would do as compared to previous reports and would already be ready to tell me how they made those changes. Without the technology component, I don't know that parents would have tried as hard or ever been able to know how they were doing."

"When parents stop the home visit to take selfies of themselves with their LENA Report, you know they are all-in."

## What Parents Are Saying

Anonymous parent survey data included comments such as:



"I'm telling my brother he needs to do these things with his kids. He thinks this is what school is for, but I'm telling him no - you have to do it now because waiting 'till they start school is too late!"

"I've learned to communicate better...my child comes up with new words every day."

"I like how it makes you take a hard look at the quality of time you spend with your kids."

"Why didn't anyone tell me this sooner?"

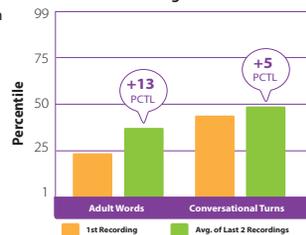
"I learned that my boy may have a little body, but he has a big mind!"



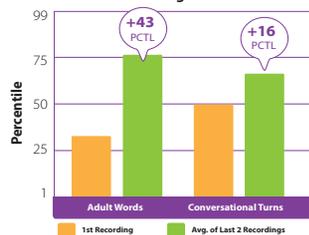
## More Feedback Means Better Outcomes

The frequency of shared feedback provided motivation for caregivers. Families with weekly or bi-weekly data reflection averaged gains 30 percentile points higher in adult word counts and 11 percentile points higher in conversational turns than families with more than 4 weeks between feedback. This impacted program scheduling for years 2 & 3 by showing the need to implement weekly home visits.

### Families That Completed Less Than One Recording Per Month



### Families That Completed More Than One Recording Per Month



# LENA®

For more information, contact:  
LENA | 5525 Central Avenue | Suite 100 | Boulder, CO 80301-2820  
856-503-9918 | info@lena.org  
www.LENA.org