



PORTER – LEATH

Case Study: Promoting Healthy Social Behavior, School Readiness, and Teacher Retention

The data out of Memphis and all of Shelby County, Tenn., could not be ignored. District-wide graduation rates, grade-level reading rates, and Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) metrics all painted the same picture: Kindergarten readiness and student achievement were lagging.

In 2015, a collective impact partnership called Seeding Success outlined a plan for improving education outcomes with early childhood education. Porter-Leath, a Memphis-based nonprofit that is the local grantee for Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool services, helped galvanize one innovation to come out of that plan: LENA Grow.

With their LENA Grow program, Porter-Leath has produced clear results:

- Improved language, literacy, and social-emotional development.
- Higher i-Ready® school readiness assessment scores.
- Increased job satisfaction and retention among the ECE workforce.
- Stronger school-home connection, using early talk data to engage parents.



LENA
GROW®

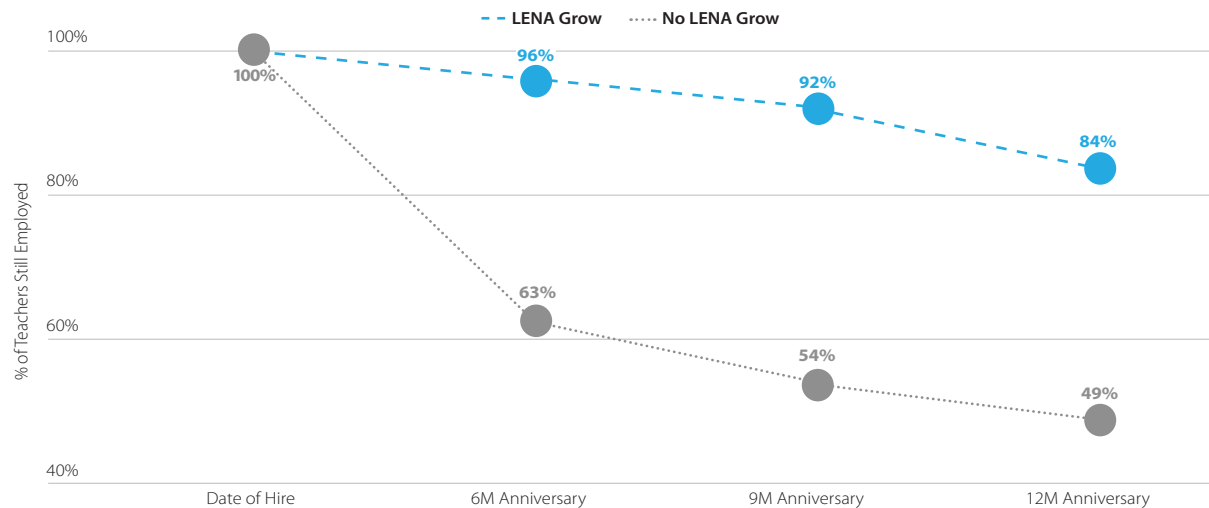
LENA Grow is an evidence-based professional development program helping teachers improve language environments in early childhood classrooms. **LENA Grow has been shown to increase early assessment scores, such as CLASS®, GOLD®, DECA, BRIGANCE®, i-Ready®, KRA, and LAP™ B-K, as well as to boost teacher job satisfaction and retention.**

Improved Teacher Retention

Program evaluators posed an important question: What kind of impact might LENA Grow have on teacher retention? They analyzed the work histories of educators working at Porter-Leath's Early Head Start sites.

The results are striking:

- Among all educators, 57% of non-Grow teachers left their position, compared to just 27% of teachers who participated in LENA Grow. LENA Grow teachers were 2x more likely to remain in their jobs.
- Newly hired educators who did LENA Grow during their first six months were 5x more likely to stay in their jobs. 84% of them reached their 12-month anniversary, compared to only 49% of non-Grow educators.



According to end-of-program surveys, LENA Grow went hand-in-hand with **increased job satisfaction** and **increased confidence in teaching abilities**.



"I have grown tremendously in this program. I now know the true meaning of why language development is important at an early age."

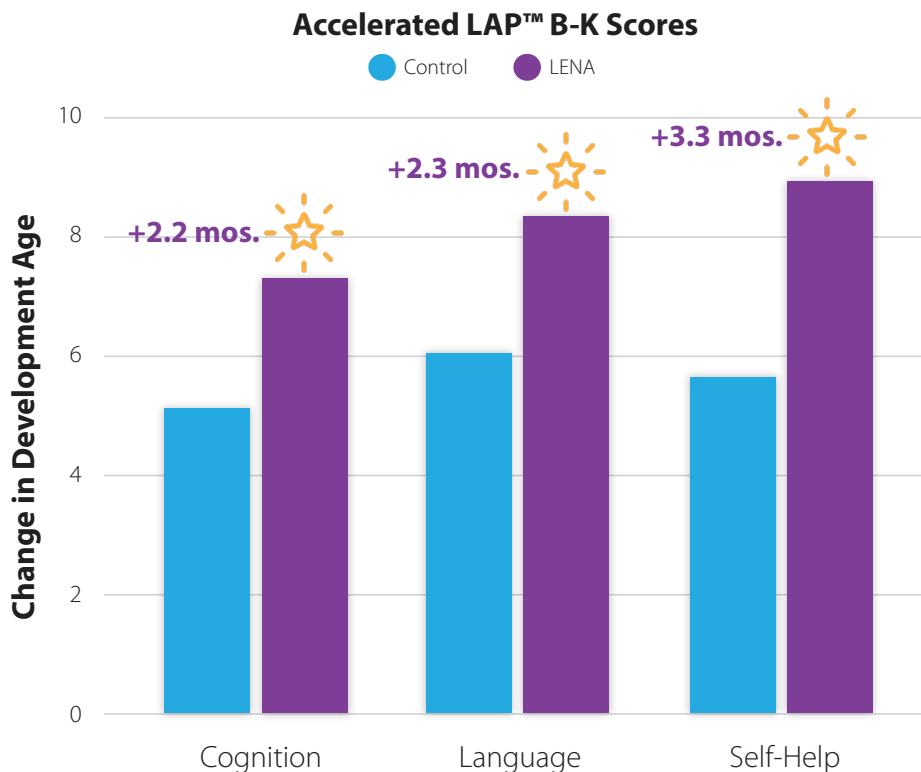
— Felicette Perry, Early Head Start educator

Fostering Healthy Social Behaviors

Challenging behaviors often occur when a child feels they have no other way to express their feelings and needs. In early classroom settings, increasing positive interactions and conversational turns can help children learn to express healthy social-emotional behaviors.

The Learning Accomplishment Profile™: Birth to Kindergarten (LAP™ B-K) assesses children's skill development in six domains, including two that are relevant to managing challenging behavior. Among children at Porter-Leath Early Head Start sites:

- LENA Grow participants experienced statistically significant increases in the Self-Help domain **when compared to a control group**.
- Conversational turn rates predicted scores in **Cognitive, Language, Self-Help, and Social-Emotional domains**.



"My educator had a little guy who threw tantrums multiple times daily (upwards of 10x per day). By looking at her interactions with just him, she was able to see that she needed to spend more time talking with him. Once she did this, she saw his tantrums decrease significantly to less than FIVE PER WEEK!"

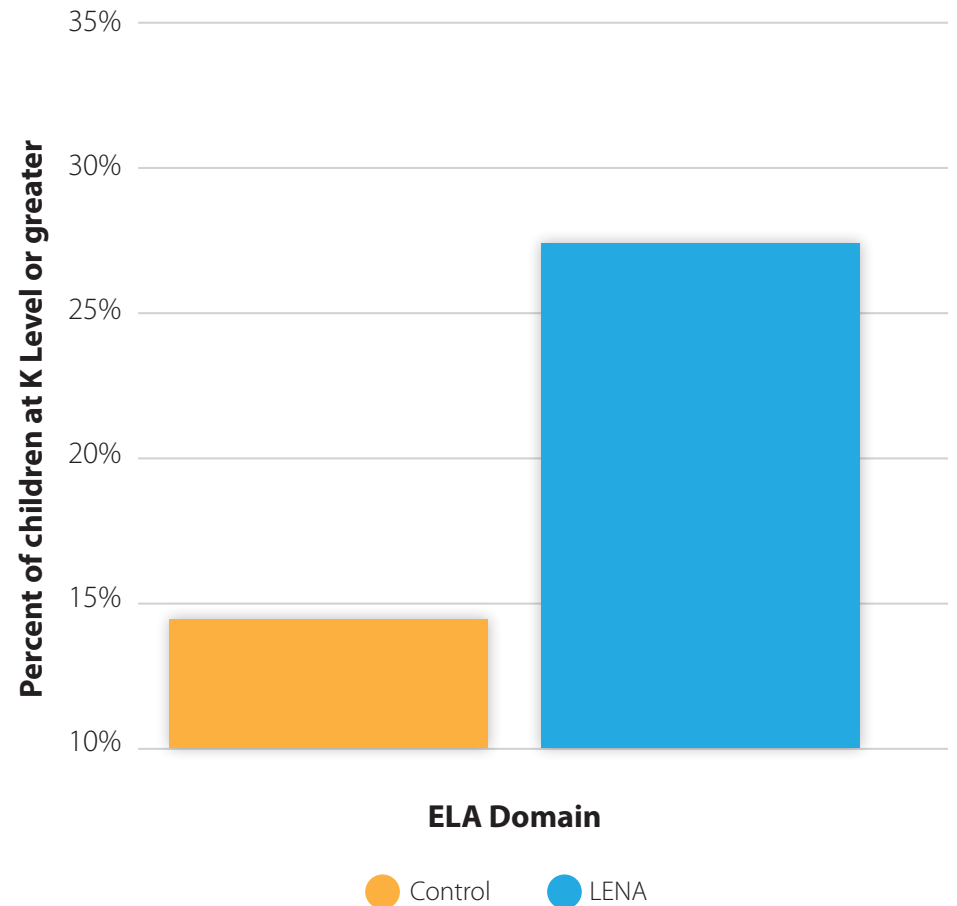
— Dee Wimberly, Early Childhood Quality Coach



2x More Likely To Be Kindergarten Ready

According to i-Ready® assessment data from Shelby County Schools, children who participated in LENA Grow at Porter-Leath at three years of age or older were 2.2x more likely than children in a demographically matched control group to be at kindergarten level in English-Language Arts.

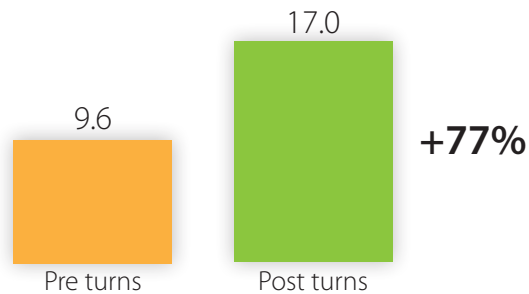
- The average i-Ready® score for LENA Grow participants was 344.1, compared to 334.9 for the control group.
- 27.3% of LENA Grow participants were at or above grade level, compared to 14.4% for matched controls.



Growing LENA Grow at Porter-Leath

- 1999: Porter-Leath selected as the first Early Head Start grantee in Shelby County
- 2017: Launches the Teacher Excellence Program, a continuum of professional development supports for early childhood educators
- 2019-2022: Implements LENA Grow in more than 100 classrooms through partnership with the University of Memphis CEED program, and with funding from the Urban Child Institute
- 2022: Launches NEXT Memphis, a shared service program which supports early education providers in Shelby County and serves 1,300 families annually
- 2023-2024: Embarks on vision for bringing LENA Grow to all classrooms within the network, with continued funding from the Urban Child Institute
- 2025-2026: With an expansion grant from the Office of Head Start, expands LENA Grow into more classrooms

Children who started out experiencing **less talk than the national median of 15 turns per hour** had an average increase of **+7.4 turns per hour**.



“Porter-Leath has been implementing the LENA Grow coaching model as an investment to bring significant benefits to our Early Head Start program. This comprehensive approach strengthens the bond between caregivers and children, creating a nurturing and supportive environment for optimal early childhood development.”

— Dr. Kelley Corbin, Vice President of Early Childhood Services at Porter-Leath

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