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HOPES

LENA
GROW

Improving Language Development at HOPES Community Action Partnership in New Jersey

Based in Hoboken, N.J., HOPES CAP, Inc., has been on a mission to fight the causes of poverty since its founding in 1964. From the beginning, early childhood education has been central to that mission.

In addition to operating Head Start and Early Head Start programs in three New Jersey counties, HOPES CAP provides preschool services within the City of Hoboken as part of the State-Funded Preschool Program. The Hoboken program has achieved accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 2007.

Through their Head Start and preschool programs, HOPES CAP enrolls about 1,200 children annually.

Launching LENA

In 2022, HOPES CAP partnered with the national nonprofit LENA to bring LENA Grow to its infant and toddler Head Start classrooms.

When teachers participate in LENA Grow, they complete a five-week

reflective feedback cycle. The cycle employs LENA's wearable device, data-rich feedback reports, and strengths-based coaching to measurably increase teacher-child verbal interactions, or conversational turns. Conversational turns are one of the most predictive metrics of child outcomes, having been linked to:

- Brain structure and function
- Language and literacy development
- Emotional development
- Vocabulary acquisition
- Long-term cognitive outcomes such as IQ score.

The LENA Grow Effect

Between January of 2023 and July of 2025 at Hopes CAP:

- Children who started out experiencing less talk than their peers in the same classroom saw an average increase of 5.9 conversational turns per hour on average, a 30% uptick.



LENA Grow is an evidence-based professional development program helping teachers improve language environments in early childhood classrooms, especially for children who start the program experiencing the least interactive talk. It 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.

- Children who came into the LENA Grow program experiencing fewer than the national median of 15 turns per hour averaged an 87% increase in conversational turns.
- Children in one LENA Grow classroom began the program experiencing eight conversational turns per hour on average, about half the national median. After five weeks, they were experiencing 29 turns per hour, a 260% increase.
- One child went from experiencing just two turns per hour — considered language isolation — to experiencing 35 turns per hour.

Educator Impact

At the end of a five-week LENA Grow sequence, educators complete a survey reporting on the impact of the LENA Grow program. At HOPES CAP, nearly 90% of teachers reported an increase in their overall job satisfaction, while 95% said they saw positive changes in children's language development.



"Our experience with LENA has greatly influenced both my teachers and me, helping to boost positive interactions and build stronger, more connected communities with our children."

— Rashauna Alston, Education Supervisor, HOPES CAP, Inc.

