



Case Study: Improving CLASS® Scores and Literacy Outcomes in Dayton, Ohio

Founded in 2014, the nonprofit organization Preschool Promise works in partnership with the City of Dayton and Montgomery County to advocate for the importance of early childhood education and to expand access to high-quality child care.

Preschool Promise also provides free professional development for early childhood educators, investing in evidence-based programs to boost classroom quality, literacy development, and kindergarten readiness.

Launching LENA

In 2020, Preschool Promise received a Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) subgrant from the Ohio State Department of Education and Workforce, in partnership with Miami Valley Child Development Centers. With the CLSD funds, they invested in the LENA Grow® professional development program and the CLASS® assessment tool.

The goal: to hone early educators' focus on serve-and-return interactions in infant and toddler classrooms, leading to positive downstream effects on early literacy and school readiness. In addition, Preschool Promise wanted to shine a light on early childhood education professionals, emphasizing both for the public and the teachers themselves the critical role they play, both for families and society at large.

Increased Teacher-Child Interaction at Preschool Promise

As of late 2025, teachers in about 40 classrooms served by Preschool Promise have participated in LENA Grow. These educators embarked on a five-week journey to increase the number of conversational turns in their classrooms, especially for the children who came into the program experiencing the least interaction. After teachers' first five-week sequence of LENA Grow:

- Children who started out experiencing less talk than their peers in the same classroom saw an average increase of 5.3 conversational turns per hour on average, a **34% uptick**.
- Children who came into the LENA Grow program experiencing fewer than the national median of 15 turns per hour averaged a **76% increase** in conversational turns.
- Children in one LENA Grow classroom began the program experiencing just eight conversational turns per hour on average, about half the national median. After five weeks, they were experiencing 26 turns per hour, a **241% increase**.
- One child, a toddler, went from experiencing just three conversational turns per hour, considered language isolation, to experiencing 24 turns per hour, a **700% boost**.



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.

Increased CLASS® Scores, Too!

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) observation tool evaluates teacher-child interactions to improve classroom quality in early childhood education settings. Different versions of CLASS exist for infant, toddler, pre-K, and elementary classrooms, each assessing age-appropriate domains. Many states have integrated CLASS® into their quality improvement systems, as has Head Start, using it to determine star ratings and guide program self-assessment.

At Preschool Promise, baseline CLASS® observations were conducted in the Fall of 2023, prior to LENA Grow. Observations were conducted again the Spring of 2024, after teachers had completed two LENA Grow sequences.

Infant Classrooms

In infant classrooms, CLASS® measures five dimensions within a single domain: Responsive Caregiving.

- Six of seven classrooms saw substantive improvements in the Responsive Caregiving domain, averaging 9% increase across all 7 classrooms.
- The largest improvements were seen in the dimensions of Early Language Support and Facilitated Exploration (both +15%). Classrooms that started with the lowest scores tended to see the greatest gains.

Toddler Classrooms

In toddler classrooms, CLASS® measures two domains: Engaged Support for Learning and Emotional and Behavioral Support.

- Six of nine classrooms saw substantive improvements in the domain of Emotional and Behavioral Support.
- Engaged Support for Learning increased 19% across all nine classrooms.
- Results were particularly impressive in the dimensions of Language Modeling (+21%) and Facilitation of Learning and Development (+23%).

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 Preschool Promise, the results were outstanding.



Recommend LENA Grow to other teachers
(n=43)



Now feel **more confident** in teaching abilities
(n=43)



Increased overall **job satisfaction**
(n=43)



Increased **communication with families**
(n=43)



Saw changes in **children's language development**
(n=42)



“This work is so powerful. With these tools — with LENA, with CLASS — we’re able to show what we already know to be true of our teachers: that they are rockstars.”

— **Amy Kronberg**, PhD, Senior Manager

Download “**We Need To Talk: Montgomery County Early Literacy Partnership Technical Report**” at preschoolpromise.org/resources.