



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 community resource center that manages Early Head Start programs, 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 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.**

Since 2016, LENA Grow has reached more than 60,000 children and more than 16,000 infant, toddler, and preschool educators nationwide.

A 2X Impact on Teacher Retention

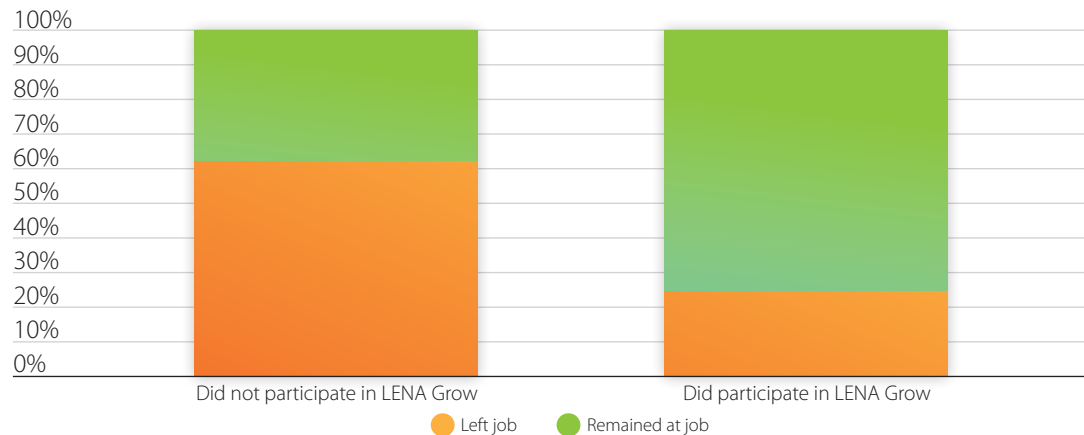
As with many early childhood education organizations, Porter-Leath's Early Head Start sites experienced an increase in educator turnover during the COVID pandemic.

Program evaluators posed an important question: What kind of impact might LENA Grow have on teacher retention? They analyzed the work histories of 116 educators working at Porter-Leath's Early Head Start sites.

The results are striking:

- Attrition was higher for teachers who did not participate in LENA Grow. More than 60 percent left their position.
- Among teachers who participated in LENA Grow, only 25 percent left their position.

Teachers who participated in LENA Grow were more than twice as likely to stay in their roles as those who did not.



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



Recommend LENA Grow to other teachers



Now feel more confident in teaching abilities



Increased overall job satisfaction



Increased communication with families



Saw changes in children's language development



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

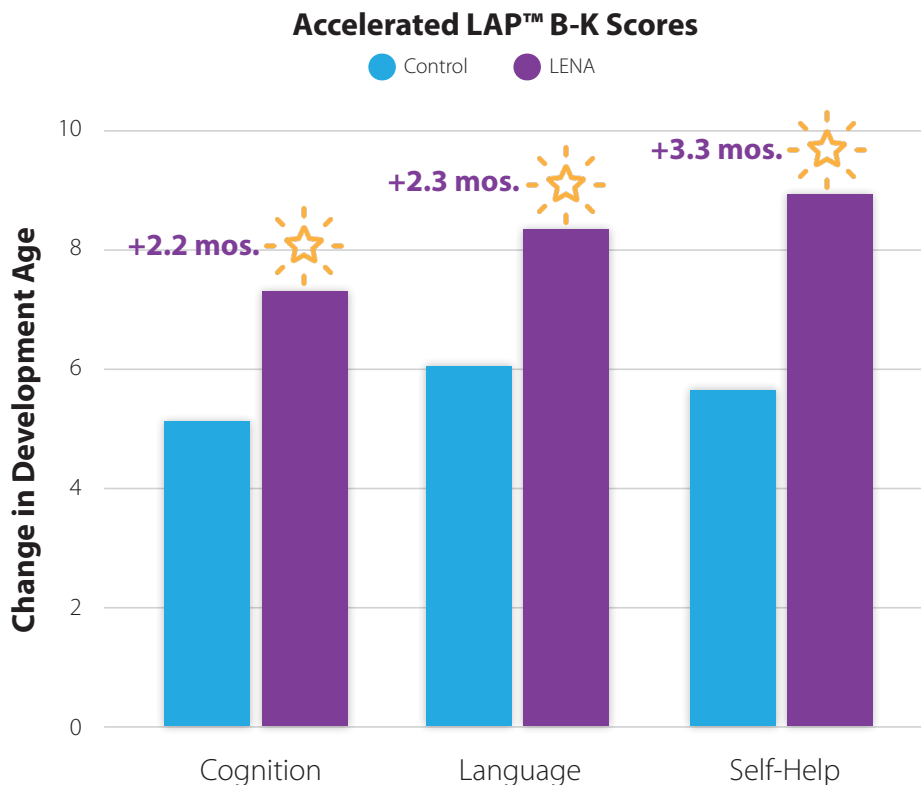
— Felicette Perry, Early Head Start educator

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!"

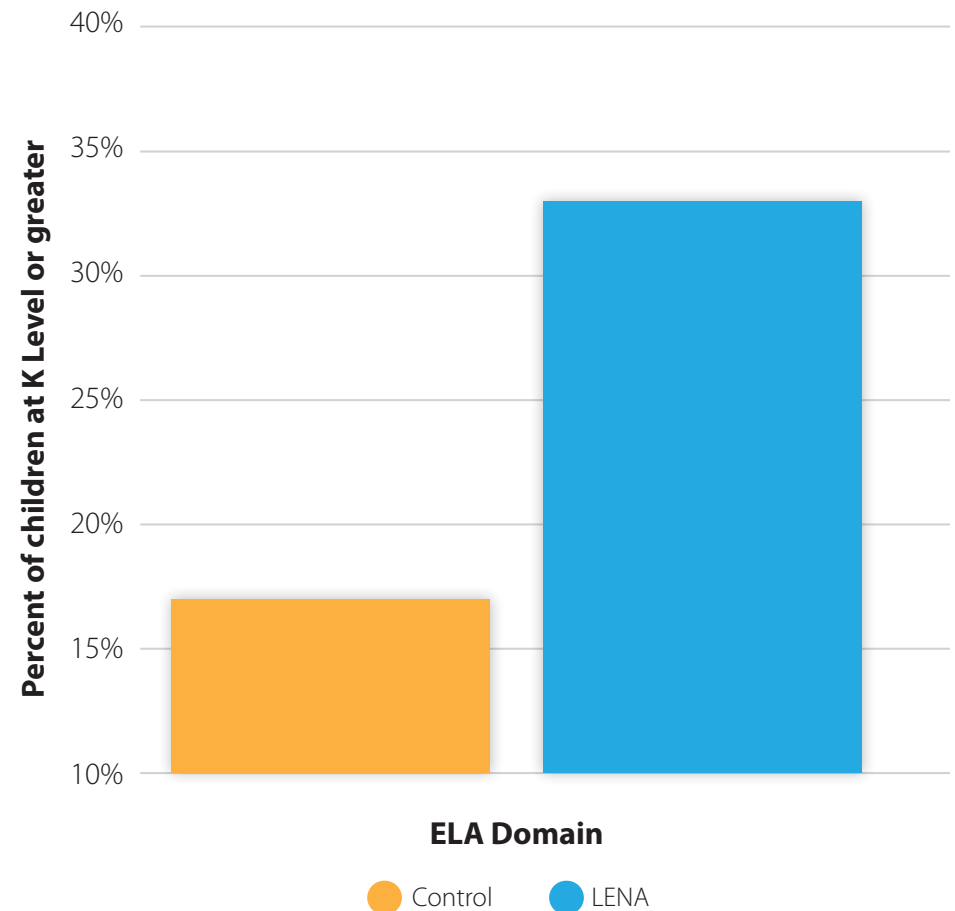
— Dee Wimberly, Early Childhood Quality Coach



2.4x 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 as preschoolers were 2.4x more likely than children in a demographically matched control group to be at kindergarten level in English-Language Arts.

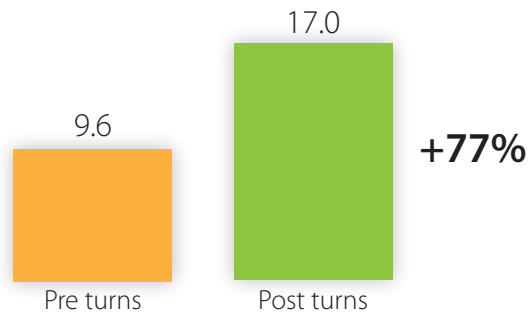
- The average i-Ready® score for LENA Grow participants was 350.2, compared to 338.7 for the control group.
- 33.3% of LENA Grow participants were at or above grade level, compared to 17.2% for matched controls.



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.
- 2019-2022: Implements LENA Grow in over 100 classrooms. In partnership with the University of Memphis CEED program, and with funding from the Urban Child Institute.
- 2022: Launches Next Memphis, a shared services program supporting early education providers in Shelby County. Currently serves 1,300 families annually.
- 2023-2024: With continued funding from the Urban Child Institute, embarks on vision for bringing LENA Grow to all 300 classrooms within the Porter-Leath/Next Memphis network.

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

LENA[®]

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