



LENA Grow Alignment with Virginia's Early Learning & Development Standards (ELDS)

LENA Grow is a research-based, job-embedded professional development program designed to help infant, toddler, and preschool educators measurably improve language classroom language environments. The program teaches caregivers the power of the conversational turn. It employs LENA's "talk pedometer" technology, concise strengths-based coaching, and data-rich reference materials to help teachers build more talk into their daily activities. LENA Grow complements Virginia's Guiding Principle that "an available, responsive adult is the most important support to the young child's learning."¹

What is LENA?

LENA is a national nonprofit on a mission to transform children's futures through early talk technology and data-driven programs. The amount of interactive talk children experience in their early years impacts brain development, social-emotional development, school readiness, and the ability to reach their full developmental potential. A 10-year longitudinal study by LENA researchers confirms that the amount of talk with adults that babies experience in the first three years of life is linked to their verbal abilities and IQ in adolescence. Together with LENA, early childhood educators can support the healthy growth and development of all children by enriching the talk environment in their classrooms. LENA's secure technology measures and automatically assesses the amount of interactive talk that a child experiences throughout the day. The resulting data is used to support professional development to increase responsive adult-child interactions.

At LENA, we emphatically believe three things:

1. Early talk is key.
2. Parents and caregivers are the secret sauce.
3. You can't improve what you don't measure.

Why LENA Grow?

Research shows that conversational turns, the back-and-forth exchanges between adults and children, are among the most predictive metrics of child outcomes.² LENA Grow combines objective feedback on the classroom talk environment with targeted coaching for teachers on how to increase interactive talk. By focusing on LENA's Talking Tips, teachers learn strategies to add interactive talk to their normal daily routines, allowing time to focus on what's most important: the children in their care. The results are stronger relationships, increased language development, and children who are more prepared for future school success.

¹ <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/va-elds-birth-5.pdf>

² <https://lena.org/conversational-turns/>

LENA Aligns with Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards’ Grounding Knowledge

“We know that during the years from birth through age 5, and particularly the years from birth through 3, the young child’s brain is growing and developing the capacity for all later learning (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). We also know that the brain’s growth is supported or undermined as a function of the child’s environment and experiences. Finally, and most importantly, we know that interactions and relationships with caregiving adults and teachers are of primary importance in supporting a child’s early development and learning (Child Trends, 2015; Dougherty, 2014; Flores et al., 2016).”³

*At LENA, we open our Program Overview of LENA Grow with the following statement: “From birth, a child has about 2,000 days before they start kindergarten. On each of those 2,000 days, tens of billions of new neural connections are forming. That’s 2,000 days for the adults in a child’s life to nurture brain development and to help set the child up for the best life possible.”*⁴

LENA Aligns with Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards’ Guiding Principles

“An available, responsive adult is the most important support to the young child’s learning.”

This principle is perfectly in tune with LENA. Back-and-forth interactions between a child and the adults in that child’s life may have an enormous bearing on the child’s future. We call those back-and-forth interactions conversational turns, and peer-reviewed research links them to improvements in brain function,⁵ socioemotional development,⁶ executive functioning,⁷ and more. LENA’s own researchers have established a link between conversational turns in toddlerhood and positive outcomes in middle school.⁸

“Early learning will require special attention, support, and strategies for children with developmental disabilities or delays.”

LENA’s individualized reports provide teachers special insight into each individual child’s language environment within their classrooms. Teachers will be able to determine which children are experiencing language isolation. Teachers can objectively see which children are being engaged in conversation and adjust their behavior in measurable ways.

“A child’s home culture and language must be recognized, respected, and accommodated in the early learning processes.”

LENA takes home language into consideration. The 14 Talking Tips are available in seven languages.⁹ The LENA device has been widely validated in multiple languages.¹⁰

“Young children learn through play.”

The 14 Talking Tips are highly focused on following the child’s lead and interest to increase conversational turns, scaffolding learning through language during the child’s play experience.

3 <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2020/11-nov/item-l-attachment-a.pdf>

4 https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/3975639/08.%20LENA%20Grow/2.%20LENA_Grow_Overview_and_Impact.pdf

5 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797617742725>

6 <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.13109>

7 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2021.100967>

8 <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-4276>

9 <https://info.lena.org/14-talking-tips>

10 <https://www.lena.org/faqs/what-languages-can-lena-technology-be-used-with/>

How does the LENA Grow Program support the classroom environment and developmental outcomes of young children?

The table below shows how LENA’s Talking Tips, the basis of LENA Grow’s strategies to increase interaction, align to Virginia’s Early Learning & Development Standards. The following chart demonstrates how the Talking Tips can support the child’s development of a specific outcome. LENA encourages coaches, technical assistance providers, directors, and observers to use Talking Tip strategies that will help caregivers support children to build skills and understanding in different areas of development.

LENA 14 Talking Tips	1. Talk about what you’re doing and thinking.	2. Comment on what they’re doing or looking at.	3. Name things that they’re interested in.	4. Get down to their level: face to face.	5. Touch, hug, hold.	6. Tune in and respond to what they look at, do, and say.	7. Wait for their response.	8. Imitate them, and add words.	9. Make faces, use gestures.	10. Take turns – don’t do all the talking	11. Repeat and add to what they say and do	12. Follow their lead, do what interests them.	13. Encourage them, be positive.	14. Be silly! Relax and have fun!
Virginia Early Learning Outcomes														
APL1. Curiosity and Initiative	X	X	X			X		X			X	X	X	
APL1.1. Being curious learners														
APL1.2. Taking initiative		X	X			X	X			X		X	X	
APL2. Creativity and Imagination		X	X			X					X	X		X
APL2.1. Showing creativity and imagination														
APL3. Executive Functions & Cognitive Self-Regulation	X		X	X		X	X			X	X			
APL3.1. Focusing and paying attention														
APL3.2. Building working memory	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X		X	
APL3.3. Thinking flexibly and adapting	X	X	X			X	X				X			
APL3.5. Persisting and problem-solving		X					X						X	
APL4. Behavioral Self-Regulation	X			X	X								X	
APL4.1. Managing actions and behaviors														
SED1. Positive Self-Concept		X	X	X		X			X	X	X			X
SED1.1. Developing self-awareness														
SED1.2. Developing self-confidence	X		X	X						X		X	X	X
SED1.3. Becoming autonomous and independent		X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	
ED2. Emotional Competence			X	X		X		X			X	X	X	
ED2.1. Seeing and naming emotions in self and others														
ED2.2. Expressing emotions					X				X				X	X

LENA 14 Talking Tips	1. Talk about what you're doing and thinking.	2. Comment on what they're doing or looking at.	3. Name things that they're interested in.	4. Get down to their level: face to face.	5. Touch, hug, hold.	6. Tune in and respond to what they look at, do, and say.	7. Wait for their response.	8. Imitate them, and add words.	9. Make faces, use gestures.	10. Take turns – don't do all the talking	11. Repeat and add to what they say and do	12. Follow their lead, do what interests them.	13. Encourage them, be positive.	14. Be silly! Relax and have fun!
SED2.3. Communicating feelings, wants, and needs	X	X		X				X		X				
SED3. Interacting with Others SED3.1. Developing relationships with adults				X	X		X			X				X
SED3.2. Developing relationships with other children		X		X		X	X	X		X	X		X	
SED3.3. Engaging in cooperative play		X		X		X	X	X		X	X		X	
SED3.4. Solving social interaction problems	X									X		X	X	
CLLD1. Communication CLLD1.1. Understanding verbal and nonverbal cues	X			X	X			X	X		X			
CLLD1.2. Using vocabulary and nonverbal cues to communicate		X	X			X					X	X		
CLLD1.3. Learning and engaging in conversational interactions				X			X	X		X				
CLLD2. Foundation of Reading CLLD2.2. Understanding ideas, vocabulary, and information in stories and texts	X	X	X			X		X				X		
HPD4. Physical Health and Self-care HPD4.1. Taking care of daily health needs	X	X		X		X					X			
HPD4.2. Adopting safe behaviors	X	X		X		X					X			
CD1. Science: The Natural and Physical World CD1.2. Testing questions and ideas	X					X	X	X		X				
CD2. Social Science: People, Community, and Culture CD2.1. Learning about ways that people interact	X			X		X	X		X	X	X			
CD2.2. Understanding relationships and connections	X			X		X	X						X	
CD3. Mathematics CD3.5. Describing, comparing, and measuring	X	X	X								X			

The table below shows how LENA's Conversation Starters, which are LENA Grow's supporting content targeting specific early childhood routines, align with Virginia Early Learning Outcomes.

LENA Conversation Starters	Virginia Early Learning Outcomes
<p>Clothing Changes</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to increase interactions during diaper changes and while preparing to go outside.</p>	<p>SED1. Positive Self-Concept SED1.3. Becoming autonomous and independent</p>
<p>Outdoor Play</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters with sample questions and tips to increase interactions during outdoor play including water and sand play.</p>	<p>APL2. Creativity and Imagination APL2.1. Showing creativity and imagination</p> <p>HPD2. Gross Motor HPD2.1. Developing large muscle control HPD2.2. Exploring the environment</p> <p>CD1. Science: The Natural and Physical World CD1.1. Paying attention to the natural world</p> <p>CD4. Fine Arts CD4.1. Exploring and expressing ideas through movement and dance</p>
<p>Shared Reading</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to engage children in shared reading.</p>	<p>CLLD2. Foundations of Reading CLLD2.1. Paying attention to print as meaningful CLLD2.2. Understanding ideas, vocabulary, and information in stories and texts</p>
<p>Mealtimes</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to increase interactions during snack and lunch times.</p>	<p>HPD4. Physical Health and Self-care HPD4.3. Eating with healthy habits</p>
<p>Transitions</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to increase interactions during transition times, including arrival and departure and starting new activities.</p>	<p>APL3. Executive Functions and Cognitive Self-Regulation APL3.3. Thinking flexibly and adapting</p> <p>SED1. Positive Self-Concept SED1.3. Becoming autonomous and independent</p>
<p>Songs & Rhymes</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on how the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to increase conversational turns and engagement with songs and rhymes.</p>	<p>CLLD2. Foundations of Reading CLLD2.3. Learning spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound</p> <p>CD4. Fine Arts CD4.1. Exploring and expressing ideas through movement and dance CD4.2. Learning about and through music</p>

<p>Indoor Play</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters with sample questions and tips to increase interactions during activity times including dramatic play and art.</p>	<p>APL2. Creativity and imagination APL2.1. Showing creativity and imagination APL3.3. Thinking flexibly and adapting APL3.1. Focusing and paying attention</p> <p>HPD2. Gross Motor HPD2.2. Exploring the environment</p> <p>CD4. Fine Arts CD4.3. Building understanding, empathy, and relationship skills through drama and theatre arts</p>
<p>Handwashing</p> <p>Coaching and support materials focus on utilizing the 14 Talking Tips and Conversation Starters to increase interactions during</p>	<p>SED1. Positive Self-Concept SED1.3. Becoming autonomous and independent</p> <p>HPD4. Physical Health and Self-care HPD4.1. Taking care of daily health needs</p>

This alignment was based on the Virginia Board of Education's Virginia's Early Learning & Development Standards (Elds) Birth-Five Learning Guidelines.¹¹

11 <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/va-elds-birth-5.pdf>