

Parents Have the Power: Solutions for the Early Catastrophe



Findings from the 2015 LENA Conference



LENATM
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

About the LENA Research Foundation



Our sole focus is on improving language environments

The first years of a child's life are the most critical time for language development. LENA measures talk with children and provides feedback that motivates parents and caregivers to increase language interaction and build children's brains. Hospitals, school districts, libraries, and other service organizations across the country are using LENA feedback with families to close the early learning gap.

For more detailed information on LENA's delivery models and bringing LENA to your community, please see Appendix C on page 34.

LENA Research Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity based in Boulder, Colorado.



LENA captures a full day of talk with a small, child-safe recorder worn in a comfortable vest. Recordings are translated into data about talk, provided in clear reports shared with families.

The Conference: Background

In November of 2015, the LENA Research Foundation of Boulder, Colorado, hosted a three-day conference in Denver entitled “Parents Have the Power: Solving the ‘early catastrophe’ through science and parental investment.” The phrase “early catastrophe” came from a 2003 article by Drs. Betty Hart and Todd Risley about their earlier groundbreaking research showing that talk deficits during the first 36 months of life are the primary cause of gaps in cognitive development, school readiness, and prospects for future success.

The article concluded:

The longer the effort is put off, the less possible change becomes.

“...the problem of skill differences among children at the time of school entry is bigger, more intractable, and more important than we had thought....Estimating the hours of intervention needed to equalize children’s early experience makes clear the enormity of the effort that would be required to change children’s lives. And the longer the effort is put off, the less possible change becomes.”¹

2015 was the 20th anniversary of Hart and Risley’s original publication. Their conclusions have been reinforced in recent years by research from a variety of disciplines, to the point where the critical importance of the “word gap” is generally accepted. But this acceptance has produced no consensus about how to close the gap, let alone a concerted societal effort to do so. On the contrary, the communities of research, practice, policy, and funding pursue diverse directions that tend to produce more silos than solutions.

The LENA Foundation convened the 2015 conference in an effort to turn this diversity into dialog. Those three days in November brought together researchers and practitioners who seldom spend time in the same room. A full agenda with topics and presenters is found in the Appendices, but the breadth of coverage may be seen in the following partial list of disciplines represented:

- Public education
- Public libraries
- Hospitals and public health agencies
- Early language researchers
- Citywide intervention programs
- Speech-language science
- Public policy, funding, and public awareness groups

These diverse experts assembled to seek common ground, shared experiences, and clearer direction. As presentations and discussions unfolded, five broad themes emerged:

1. The problem is systemic and deeply rooted; there is no simple quick

1 Hart, B., & Risley, T. (2003). “The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3.” *American Educator*. Spring 2003.

fix.

2. Collaboration and coordination among diverse disciplines are essential to a solution.
3. Parents have the power to make the difference – one presenter called it the “secret sauce.”
4. Technology plays a crucial role – or roles.
5. Despite the magnitude of the problem, there are signs of real progress.

The following sections expand on these shared conclusions.



The problem is systemic and deeply rooted; there is no simple quick fix.

As societal awareness of the early-learning gap increases, proposals for addressing it proliferate. Most of them, not surprisingly, focus on early education, such as mandating kindergarten for four-year-olds, or expanding federal preschool programs. But presenters and panelists unanimously agreed with opening speaker Ralph Smith: it is an “inconvenient truth” that for a significant number of children, the problem is beyond the customary reach of schools.

Equity must start, not on the first day of school, but on the first day of every child's life.

Despite the success of programs such as the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, of which Smith is managing director, even preschool (usually for 4-year-olds) is too late to make a difference for many children – disproportionately, children of color. These children start school behind, they benefit from it less, they are often absent, and they fall further behind every summer. Dana Suskind reflected that the LENA Research Foundation itself originated in the frustration founders Terry and Judi Paul experienced helping schools try to close these gaps. She asserted that equity must start, not on the first day of school, but on the first day of every child's life.

The problem can also be regarded as a public health crisis. A good illustration of the connection with medical science is Betty Vohr's work with early pre-term babies. Vohr has proven a clear connection between preemies' language delays and reduced maternal language due to time spent in neonatal intensive care units (NICUs). She compares the resulting “sensory deprivation” to the experience of a deaf or hard-of-hearing child. Erik Pakulak pointed out that areas of the brain important to cognitive development and learning are also those that control stress response and self-regulation, and that there is a clear link with socioeconomic status (SES). Kat Kaufmann observed that, in the birth-3 age span in which intervention is needed, a huge public health system already exists, with 45% of births funded by Medicaid and “well child” visits that commonly touch on areas beyond strict medical needs.

Casey Wardinski, however, disagreed with the “public health” description. To him, it

Everyone needs help caring for babies – even physicians.

is a matter of school readiness, and given the importance of an educated populace, it amounts to a national security crisis. Several speakers and panelists addressed the issue in terms of economics and public policy. Dimitri Christakis pointed out the irony of huge public expenditures for school interventions, the juvenile justice system, penal recidivism, and unemployment, where a much smaller investment in early intervention could make much of these costs unnecessary. He urged reframing the discussion from a debate about “entitlements” to a simple understanding that everyone needs help caring for babies – even physicians like himself.

The “reframing” argument was echoed by Comer Yates, who urged that poverty be reframed as “generational lack of access to educational opportunity.” He believes that poverty is the result, not the cause, of disadvantages like the talk gap. The cause, he believes, is cultural: a prevailing mindset of discouraging speech among certain minority subpopulations, affecting adults as well as children. When applied to child-rearing and schools, this culture of silence perpetuates itself from one generation to the next. “Silencing children is educational child abuse,” he declared, tying this phenomenon to the “Matthew Effect” that the rich get richer and the poor, poorer. “When children don’t have language, their behavior becomes their language,” he declared, explaining that restrictions on child language generate behavior problems that are then used to further justify the culture of silence.

No one “channel” delivers the necessary dosage for effectiveness, so multiple approaches are called for.

Overall, there was substantial agreement that there is no one “right” way to depict the problem of early-childhood gaps. They constitute a multi-faceted problem that requires multi-faceted solutions. Dana Hughes raised the concern that the present explosion of initiatives and research into the “talk gap” may dilute the impact. Catherine Atkin responded that no one “channel” delivers the necessary dosage for effectiveness, so multiple approaches are called for; collaboration is needed, but also a focus on implementation. Christakis echoed this theme; he suggested that any proposal for new initiatives should contain provisions for sustainability to insulate against future changes in leadership or funding priorities, and to scale initiatives that are demonstrated effective in the field.



Collaboration and coordination among diverse disciplines are essential to a solution.

Gaps in talk and readiness have built up over generations.

Several presenters made the point that no one solution, or type of solution, can solve the problem, nor will it be solved quickly. While continuing to hold schools accountable to do the best job they can to help children who enter the education system already behind, we must recognize that improving schools goes only so far. Smith and Yates each made the point that the gaps in talk and readiness have built up over generations. They urge at least a two-generation solution; Pakulak and Meera Mani are other vocal advocates of this viewpoint. To reach and help the babies, we must at

the same time reach and help the parents, who probably suffered from the same kind of gap in their childhood (see Section 3, below).

The list of participating disciplines in the introduction to this paper gives an idea of the diversity of professionals interested in a solution, but it also suggests potential conflicts of focus. In the breakout discussions of implementation issues that concluded the conference, “partnership” was frequently cited as a necessity, but also as a minefield. Experienced practitioners observed that the right community partners, for instance, are essential to scaling any intervention, particularly organizations that already serve large numbers of parents, have earned their trust, and have established infrastructure. On the other hand, existing organizations can come with baggage in terms of community perception that can make parents cautious about participating.

The right community partners are essential to scaling any intervention.

Even well-respected organizations often have multiple interests and existing programs that distract or dilute attention from the early language intervention. Initiatives acquire a life of their own, which too often makes it difficult to coordinate and focus on common goals. Andrew Medlar drew rueful laughter with the analogy that everyone agrees brushing teeth is a good idea but everyone wants his or her own toothbrush.

Several presenters found reason for optimism, however. Atkin feels that consolidation will naturally happen as the movement matures. Christakis suggested that widespread demonstration of solutions that work could encourage researchers to move on to other topics, reducing the number of new proposals that might duplicate or distract.

Kara Dukakis of Too Small to Fail (TSTF) reported that their approach to building momentum for city-wide change in selected urban areas involves “an air game and a ground game.” The national “air game” focuses on two types of partnerships:

- Medical organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, to reach practitioners who have connections with parents of young children
- The entertainment industry, for insertion of the message into news stories, public service announcements, and even “placements” in the plots of TV shows

TSTF’s “ground game” in targeted cities involves identifying trusted messengers with community touchpoints and activities. In some markets, faith-based organizations are key; often hospitals are important partners. The important common element is to go where parents go – churches, grocery stores, laundromats, playgrounds, and of course pediatricians’ offices. TSTF’s deliverables when they reach parents involve partnerships as well, with materials donated by different for-profit and non-profit educational organizations, as well as videos linked to community organizations and other technology (see Section 4, below).

The important common element is to go where parents go.

Conventional philanthropy can be a barrier as well as an enabler to a comprehensive solution. Smith bluntly asserted that “philanthropy is part of the problem.” Institutional donors tend to “shrink the problem” to a narrowed focus that cleanly fits their mission, or to exclude elements that lack overwhelming statistical proof of effectiveness. He recommended that donors, when considering what to fund, use the medical model

of the “drug cocktail”: a combination of elements. Often an effective solution can contain some tactics supported by a preponderance of statistical evidence, and some with less support. Too often, he cautioned, national funding swamps regional and local funding and may drive adoption of “one size fits all” approaches that do not sufficiently adjust to local situations. Perhaps partly from this concern, Wardynski expressed a clear preference for funds that do not depend on federal programs but are more grass-roots and controllable.

Ultimately, the problem requires an umbrella of coordination and enabling (funding as well as mass communication) under which diverse organizations can gather to address the problem in coordinated, if not always identical, ways. An example is Rhode Island’s “Providence Talks” initiative, which director Courtney Hawkins reports is recruiting an increasingly diverse set of social-services agencies to help parents increase early childhood talk. Venues differ (home visitation, parent groups, childcare classrooms²), as do contact strategies, but all are united around a common message and the enabling LENA technology (see Section 4, below). Another example is Minneapolis, where mayor Betsy Hodges has created a “Cradle to K Cabinet” to address inequities in school readiness using a variety of approaches (including LENA technology and curriculum) and different types of organizations from both inside and outside the community.



Parents have the power to make the difference: the “secret sauce.”

The centrality of parents – embedded in the conference title – was reaffirmed in almost every presentation or discussion. Parent power has, regrettably, not always been so prominent in this field. Too often, past interventions have been designed to go around parents, or to intervene directly with children outside the home environment. While well-meaning, such approaches imply that parents are the problem, or at best, not part of the solution. To the contrary, Suskind asserted, most parents will make the best choices for their children if they are given the information with which to do so.

We must acknowledge that parents love their children more than we do.

Parent talk builds the whole child. Parents are in the best position to build their children’s future. Smith put it directly: “The ‘secret sauce’ is parents. We must acknowledge that parents love their children more than we do, and just need the tools to pursue their goals for their kids.” He pointed out that LENA technology, in supplying readily accessible feedback on amount of parent and child talk, is “pure and simple an affirmation of parents.”

Most of the new and promising interventions presented at the conference, both technological and otherwise, have their effect by involving parents, not excluding

2 Childcare classroom implementation was added to the LENA family in 2016 – see Appendix B.

them.

- Pakulak described results of the “Creating Connections” program at the University of Oregon that involves brain training for children and supporting classes for parents. Results show improvements in children’s self-regulation abilities and in parents own mechanisms for regulation and stress reduction.
- Susan Landry reported on success with the Play and Learning Strategies (PALS) intervention, originally implemented with preemies, but used for 14 years with general populations of disadvantaged families. PALS focuses on informing parents and caregivers of the importance of talk, and teaching them to model and self-critique communication with their babies. “Mom becomes the expert,” Landry says, and involves other adults who participate in the child’s life. Changes in parent behavior in PALS statistically predicts changes in children’s language behavior.
- Vohr’s work in the NICU encourages parents of preemies to talk more to their babies, using video to show parents how they and other parents have valuable interactions even in early stages of development. LENA technology has provided measurements of the volume of talk.
- Suskind’s organization, which uses LENA to help increase parents’ awareness of talk in the home, sees parents as “partners in development” and encourages them to share the message with other parents.

The critical role of parents, of course, goes back to Hart and Risley’s original work.

Reflecting on the 20-year history of this research, Steve Warren, a former colleague of those seminal researchers, zeroed in on one of their key qualitative findings, sometimes overlooked in popular focus on the quantitative (“30 million words”). Hart and Risley noted that word counts were not the only factor that differed with income: so did the pattern of negative vs positive parent/child interactions. Affirmations, and speech that was neither directive nor disciplinary, increased threefold in the comparison of high vs low talk. So increasing parent/child interactions is a matter of quality, not just quantity.

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quantity.***

Most recently, several interventions incorporating LENA technology have demonstrated how parents welcome feedback on talk and its potential to improve their children’s lives. Hawkins reported that parents in the Providence Talks program have come to understand their power in the education of their children. The LENA Start™ parent group model shows the added dimension of parents working together toward a common goal. Carine Risley, director of the San Mateo County (CA) implementation, said their experience had demonstrated the “power of the peer group.” Quavis Brown, coordinator in Huntsville (AL), said that within just a few group sessions, parents began problem-solving together, coupling the data they receive from recordings with techniques they learn in the program, and using the resulting insights to help each other.

The challenges of culture arose in several discussions. Anne Fernald recounted experiences with behavior-change programs in India, Senegal, Yucatan, and elsewhere. In some cases, data-driven behavior change that seems obvious to a western middle-class mind collides with traditions or values that are very hard to influence. Her conclusion was not to concede defeat but to find positive uses for the tension – whether finding metaphors in the existing culture to support increased

talk, or to educate parents that the world of new requirements their children will face requires new approaches. Landry directly addressed the challenge that the focus on language is “middle class”; her answer was “Yes – we are giving parents the tools to help their children get into the middle class.”³

Ultimately, whatever culture they come from, parents want what is best for their children, and understanding how they can best help make a better future for them motivates the actions needed to start closing the gap.



Technology plays a crucial role – or roles.

Often, discussions of technology in education focus on “educational apps” designed to teach children directly, claiming to engage them with touch screens, animations, sound, interaction, some level of personalization, game-based learning, and generally some sort of mobile device. These types of applications were almost totally absent from the deliberations of the conference, whether because of doubts concerning their efficacy (or indeed, the value of “screen time” of any sort during the first 24+ months), or simply because of the emphasis on parent-directed rather than child-directed interventions mentioned earlier.

Technologies that improve language development are those that involve parents along with their children.

In general, Christakis observed, technologies that improve language development are those that involve parents along with their children. He cited as an example “Bedtime Math,” an app that delivers a fun math lesson each day for parent and child to spend time with together. He cautioned, however, that the wrong kind of technology can have the opposite effect. For instance, cellphones may appear to lessen the talk gap by increasing amounts of adult words, but actually have a negative effect because the words do not involve the child.

The technology cited most often during the conference, not surprisingly, was the LENA System™ for recording and delivering metrics on daily talk in the baby’s home environment (see fuller description at front of this paper). The system accommodates multiple models for supporting parents. Hawkins reported that Providence Talks, a model combining LENA feedback with a parent coaching curriculum, had leveraged existing home visitation programs to reach almost 200 families since late 2013,⁴ with significant gains occurring especially in those families with the lowest statistics upon entrance into the program. LENA Start, the parent-group model mentioned in Section 3, began in two urban areas in spring of 2015 and had so far reached over 100 families, with expansion planned in 2016 to more families in those cities and to

³ In the year following the conference, Huntsville and other implementers of LENA Start have observed significant additional results and insights – see Section 5.

⁴ As of the date of this white paper, Providence Talks had expanded to several additional agencies and reached almost 800 families.

three new municipalities. Technology to manage the large number of users and the amount of feedback and data generated is necessary to take such programs to scale.

Since the date of this conference, additional versions of the LENA System have been introduced to support a variety of home-visitation models including various forms of language delay (LENA Home), and to childcare and preschool facilities (LENA Class). Many children spend up to 60% of their waking hours in these facilities, so improving the language environment during those times could have substantial impact. LENA Class monitors the amount of language in classrooms, providing feedback to teachers and care workers, driving professional development, and monitoring children's language development throughout the year.

Technology to manage the large number of users is necessary to take programs to scale.

Text messaging is another powerful tool. In the LENA Start program, texts help reinforce meeting attendance, recording, and shared book reading. Kathryn Bigelow delivered a poster session on "Project Engage," a home-based parent engagement intervention that includes brief reminders and reinforcements via text. The TSTF program co-led by Dukakis employs Text4Baby technology to provide text reinforcements as well as reminders for meetings and other events – in conjunction, again, with instructional videos. Peggy Sissel's poster session featured another approach to constructive use of cell phones in Time2Talk2Baby, which uses QR codes to generate timely audio material supporting verbal interaction; this intervention particularly targets parents with lower literacy levels.

Other technologies play active roles. Landry and Yates both reported on web-based training programs that improve the skills of childcare providers. "Old tech" such as video is still very powerful. Landry reported how the 14-year-old PALS program (mentioned in Section 3) uses video recordings of real mothers to model language behavior and teach caregivers how to self-critique and assess their children's response. New developments in PALS include tests of remote coaching via "telepresence": mobile notebooks that access a videoconferencing technology to try and extend the geographic reach of the program. Video also plays a central role in Suskind's "Thirty Million Words" initiative, both to illustrate key curriculum points and to model parent-child behavior. Videos and personal coaching in this program are supported by feedback from the LENA System.



Despite the magnitude of the problem, there are signs of real progress.

Twenty years after Hart & Risley first published their findings, early childhood language is finally getting the attention it deserves. Large-scale, multi-partner programs like TSTF are raising awareness among parents, policy-makers, and funders. Previously divergent disciplines are starting to unite around a common cause. It was noted in the "Whose Job Is This, Anyway?" panel discussion, for instance, that NIH and

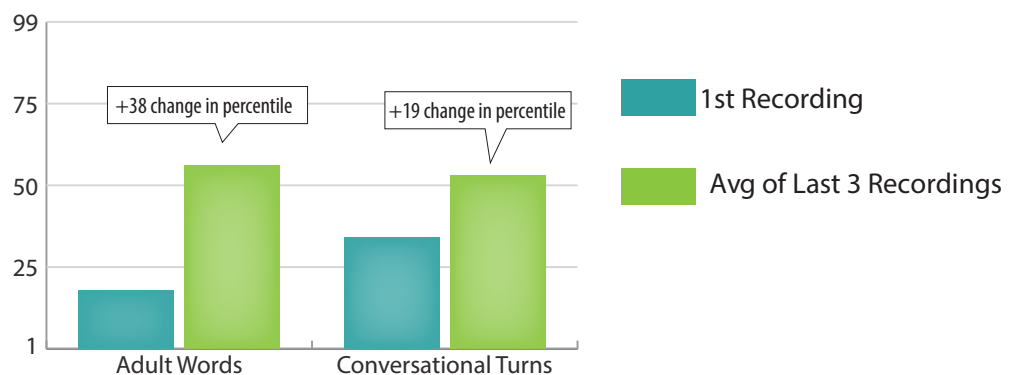
others increasingly require a transdisciplinary approach in any intervention study they will consider funding.

But ultimately, all effective efforts to help parents improve early language, like all politics, are local. Mani observed that large-scale philanthropy is good for funding advocacy and proofs of concept, but implementation is what actually changes behavior. Wardynski pointed out that the technology and program materials are inexpensive, at least on a per-family basis; the challenge is creating local organizations that can scale the interventions to meet the needs. Several presenters and discussants agreed that parent recruitment is an ongoing challenge, requiring 10-20 parents contacted on average for every parent enrolled, and reminders and “nudges” required to ensure initial participation after enrollment. Harriet Dichter concurred that the ultimate challenge is sustainability at the local level, though perhaps with a role for some ongoing federal support.

All effective efforts to help parents improve early language, like all politics, are local.

Fortunately, local initiatives are taking root and having an impact. Kaufmann pointed out that people intuitively grasp the role of the family with children birth to 3 – it is easier to understand than it is with other age groups. What is needed is awareness, coordination, and multi-year commitment. TSTF’s ground game is nurturing local initiatives in Tulsa, Oakland, and elsewhere. Providence Talks, one of the first city-wide initiatives in this space (described in Section 2), was seeded with a \$5 million Mayor’s Challenge grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies, but the vision is to generate sustained funding as the program proves wider and wider impact. In the year following this conference, the LENA Start parent-group model expanded from two sites running four classes in spring of 2015 to metro areas in five states (see summary of initial results below).

Summary of for LENA Start 2015 & 2016 cohorts



Ultimately, the force that will expand early-language interventions is the same force that makes the difference in each home: the power of parents. Success breeds success, and enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm. Providence, Huntsville, San Mateo, and other communities have demonstrated that the most credible evangelists for increasing talk with children 0-3 are parents who have seen the transformation in their own families.

As Smith declared at the start of the conference, parents want the best for their children. Yates, toward the end of the conference, brought the message full circle by quoting from a previous talk by Smith: “Illiteracy is a tragedy against which we all must rebel.” Judging by the evidence and energy of three days in November 2015, that revolution has begun.

“Illiteracy is a tragedy against which we all must rebel.”

Appendix A: LENA Conference 2015 Agenda



Sunday

Fall River Ballroom

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm — Registration

4:30 pm - 4:45 pm — **Opening Remarks**

4:45 pm - 5:45 pm — **Poster Review & Reception**

"Bridging Research to Community and Community to Research"

Co-sponsored by Bridging the Word Gap National Research Network

5:45 pm - 7:00 pm — **Panel Discussion**



You can't sell it, you can't store it, you can't list it on the New York Stock Exchange, but a caregiver's language is the essential resource of every country, every culture, every person, extending into every crevice of who we are, what we can do, and how we behave. And it doesn't cost a cent.



Dana Suskind, MD

*Author of *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain**



Posters & Panels

Bridging the Health Care and Early Childhood Divide

- Panelist:** **Alan Mendelsohn, MD**
New York University School of Medicine
- Poster:** **Adriana Weisleder, PhD**
New York University School of Medicine
- Poster:** **Ashley Darcy Mahoney, PhD, NNP**
Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing
- Poster:** **Dana Hughes, DrPH**
University of California, San Francisco
- Poster:** **Eric Pakulak, PhD**
University of Oregon
- Poster:** **Mariana Glusman, MD**
Lurie Children's Hospital, Northwestern University

Cultural, Language & Other Familial Risk Factors Affecting Parent Engagement

- Panelist:** **Judith Carta, PhD**
University of Kansas
- Poster:** **Carol Scheffner Hammer, PhD**
Teachers College, Columbia University
- Posters:** **Kathy Bigelow, PhD**
University of Kansas, Juniper Gardens Children's Project
- Poster:** **Lynne Vernon-Feagans, PhD**
University of North Carolina
- Poster:** **Megan Bair-Merritt, MD, MSCE**
Boston University

Bringing Community Insights to Research

- Panelist:** **Scott McConnell, PhD**
University of Minnesota
- Poster:** **Bryan Williams, PhD**
Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing
- Poster:** **Charles R. Greenwood, PhD**
University of Kansas, Juniper Gardens Children's Project
- Poster:** **Christopher Price**
*Bright by Three
Denver, Colorado*
- Poster:** **Cristina Smith**
*Martin County School District
Stuart, Florida*
- Poster:** **Dale Walker, PhD**
Educare Kansas City
- Poster:** **Jason Yaun, MD, and Katherine Baldwin**
*Touch, Talk, Read, Play Program Evaluation
Memphis, Tennessee*
- Poster:** **Peggy Sissell, EdD**
*Time2Talk2Baby
Little Rock, Arkansas*
- Poster:** **Rosa Valdés, PhD, and Mariel Kyger, PhD**
Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)



Monday

Ballroom

- 7:00 am - 8:00 am** — Registration and Continental Breakfast
- 8:00 am - 8:15 am** — **Opening Remarks**
Judi Paul
*Chairman and Co-Founder
LENA Research Foundation*
- 8:15 am - 9:00 am** — **“Supporting Parents’ Success: The Secret Sauce for Closing the Achievement Gap”**
Ralph Smith
*Managing Director
The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
Senior Vice President
Annie E. Casey Foundation*
- 9:00 am - 9:45 am** — **“Early Adversity and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Development of a Family-Based Intervention”**
Eric Pakulak, PhD
*Research Associate
University of Oregon*
- 9:45 am - 10:00 am** — Break
- 10:00 am - 11:30 am** — **Panel Discussion: Parent-Focused Interventions**
- “How Cultural Differences in Parenting Beliefs and Practices Inform Intervention Strategies”**
Anne Fernald, PhD
*Josephine Knotts Knowles Professor in Human Biology
Stanford University*
- “Key Ingredients of Interventions Targeting Caregivers’ Language Support for Young Children”**
Susan Landry, PhD
*Director, Children’s Learning Institute
University of Texas HSC*
- “A Need for Language Intervention in the NICU for Preterm Infants”**
Betty Vohr, MD
*Professor of Pediatrics, Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Director, Neonatal Follow-Up Clinic, Women & Infants Hospital*
- Moderator:
Scott McConnell, PhD
*Professor, Educational Psychology and Center for Early Education and Development
Fesler-Lampert Chair in Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota*
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- 11:30 am - 12:15 pm** — Lunch provided
- 12:15 pm - 1:05 pm** — **“Thirty Million Words: Building a Child’s Brain”**
Keynote: Dana Suskind, MD
*Founder and Director
 Thirty Million Words® Initiative
 Professor of Surgery
 University of Chicago*
- 1:05 pm - 1:15 pm** — **Making a Difference Award in memory of Terry Paul**
- 1:15 pm - 1:30 pm** — Break
- 1:30 pm - 2:15 pm** — **“Twenty Years Later, What Are We Doing and Why?”**
Stephen M. Hannon, PhD
*President
 LENA Research Foundation*
- 2:15 pm - 3:45 pm** — **Panel Discussion: LENA Technology in Intervention**
Courtney Hawkins
*Executive Director
 Providence Talks*
Carine Risley
*Library Services Manager
 San Mateo County Library*
Quavis Brown
*Pre-K Coordinator
 Huntsville City Schools*
 Moderator:
Michael Baum
*Director of Early Childhood Program Development
 LENA Research Foundation*
- 3:45 pm - 4:00 pm** — Break
- 4:00 pm - 4:30 pm** — **“Hart & Risley 20 Years Later: Perspectives and Progress”**
Steve Warren, PhD
*Professor of Speech-Language Sciences
 University of Kansas*
- 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm** — Reception
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Tuesday

Ballroom

- 7:00 am - 8:00 am** — Continental Breakfast
- 8:00 am - 8:10 am** — **Day 3 Welcome**
- 8:10 am - 8:30 am** — **“Weaving Early Brain and Language Development into the Fabric of Communities”**
Kara Dukakis
Director
Too Small to Fail
Senior Vice President
Strong Families and Early Learning, The Opportunity Institute
- 8:30 am - 9:45 am** — **Panel Discussion: Whose Job is This, Anyway?**
Dimitri Christakis, MD, MPH
George Adkins Professor of Pediatrics
University of Washington
Director, Center for Child Health, Behavior & Development
Seattle Children's Research Institute
Andrew Medlar
President
Association for Library Service to Children
Catherine Atkin
Executive Director
Early Learning Lab
Moderator:
Dana Hughes, DrPH
Professor of Health Policy
Department of Family and Community Medicine
and Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies
University of California, San Francisco
- 9:45 am - 10:00 am** — **Break**
- 10:00 am - 10:45 am** — **“The Language Gap as a Public Health Crisis”**
Comer Yates
Executive Director
Atlanta Speech School

10:45 am - Noon — Panel Discussion: Who Pays for This, Anyway?

Meera Mani, EdD

Director

Children, Families, and Communities (CFC) Program

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

E. Casey Wardynski, PhD

Superintendent

Huntsville City Schools

Harriet Dichter

Senior Manager

Early Education Services

ICF International

Moderator:

Katherine (Kat) Kaufmann

Partner

The Bridgespan Group

Noon - 12:15 pm — Closing Remarks

12:15 - 12:30 pm — Box lunch pick-up

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm — Lunch with LENA: Implementers on the Frontline

Topics to include:

- Recruitment: overcoming challenges, partnering to scale
- Incentives: their role in recruitment, retention, and results
- Logistics aha's, or "If I knew then what I know now..."
- How best to measure and demonstrate program impact

2:00 pm — Close

Appendix B: LENA Delivery Models

For years, LENA feedback has helped build children's brains and close opportunity gaps. Now, secure cloud access dramatically increases the reach and scalability of many different types of programs through tailored versions:

LENA START™

A complete group curriculum for parents. Our most cost-effective and scalable program.

- Serves groups of parents who have children aged birth to 30 months, up to 20 families per group.
- Easy to implement with everything you need included: software, hardware, curriculum, materials, training, and support.
- Pre-program trainings on implementing and leading the program and ongoing support throughout guide you every step of the way.
- Full content for up to 16 sessions, deliverable in Spanish and English.



LENA CLASS™

Development and training for early learning professionals.

- Designed to support those who work in early childhood group settings and easily integrated into multiple classrooms.
- Builds a progressive database of language interactions for both child and caregiver.
- Feedback is designed to increase language development; data can be analyzed on a per student, per classroom, or center-wide basis.
- Implementation and coaching support included.

LENA HOME™

Support for existing home visitation and one-on-one coaching programs.

- Reports, scheduling, text reminders, and other features support home visitors using any parenting curriculum.
- Increases productivity of parent coaching programs by objectively providing feedback to parents.
- Feedback designed to show progress over time.
- Technical assistance included.

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Save the date for the
2017 LENA Early Language Conference



Combining Approaches to Boost Early Talk

September 12-14, 2017 · Vail, Colorado

Solving the early language crisis means reaching all the adults who impact a child's life: parents, caregivers, and educators. To connect these touchpoints, we are convening experts in social change, education, healthcare, funding, and research at a multi-disciplinary colloquy in Vail, Colorado. For information on receiving an invitation to participate, please email conference@lena.org.

