

LENA – A Parent's Perspective

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Mom of twin girls Gianna (Gia) and
Jenna (JJ), age 4

Why did I start using LENA?

- Discovered pilot program.
- Aware of need to begin speaking with my girls in infancy (age at pilot – 10 months).
- Aware of my anxiety when my son began speaking 'late' (four words at 18 months).
- *Experienced difficulty 'talking' to my son when I received no response.*
- Girls were considered 'typically developing' at time of pilot.

Importance of Word Count

- Never considered this important, especially for an infant.
- Assumed that background noise, like the radio, could cover my child's need for exposure to words.
- At beginning of LENA use, adult word count was as low as approximately 4500 words.
- *Improving word count seemed daunting...until The Cat in the Hat came along!*

Concepts of Child Vocalizations and Conversational Turns

- Never considered this important to a young child's development.
- As I used the LENA system, I noticed that one of my twins vocalized and took more turns than the other (Gia).
- LENA-generated reports gave me the focus to try harder with my 'quiet' twin (JJ).
- *I learned that virtually any response from me to my child is better than no response.*

Knowing What to Look for in a Caretaker and/or Educator

- Au pairs – we emphasize and train for need to speak with and engage our children.
- Speech therapy – more willing to pursue this when recommended.
- Preschool – focus on one that encourages children to participate and engage in conversations with teachers and peers.
- *Model for other caretakers – communicate message to dad and son.*

Good News – the Lessons Stick

- *The techniques stuck with me*, perhaps because I didn't just read about them – I applied them and saw the results.
- Sticking with it even when my twins seemed to reject reading and singing.
- Awareness of my responsiveness and ensuring that I'm 'closing the communication loop' by returning their vocalizations.

And How Are Gia and JJ Doing 3 Years Later?

- I notice they take even conversational turns, though one (Gia) is still more of an 'adult' talker than the other.
- *No problems identified by the speech therapist sent to preschool to evaluate children.*
- Keeping the girls in 'bonus year' at preschool rather than begin K at age 4.
- Next challenge – encouraging Gia to enjoy reading and instilling confidence in JJ's abilities.



My beautiful girls – JJ (left) and Gia (right)

LENA born and raised!

Thank You!

- ...to those of you who offered the LENA pilot program and engineered the project.
- ...to those of you who work with typically-developing and developmentally challenged children.
- ...to those of you who developed and continue to develop LENA research.
- ***You've helped me be a more confident parent!***

Questions?

- About LENA pilot experience?
- About the girls?
- About their preschool environment(s)?
- About strategies for reaching parents?