

Press Release

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For further information contact:

Mindy Ricketts, Marketing Coordinator
mindyricketts@lenafoundation.org
303-441-9017

Minneapolis Announced as Site for LENA StartTM Parent-Driven Early Language Intervention

Mayor's Cradle to K Initiative Aims to Close the Talk Gap for Children Birth-3

Boulder, Colo., 11/10/15. The LENA Research Foundation and Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges' "Cradle to K" Cabinet have announced the early 2016 launch of the [LENA StartTM parenting program](#) as an integral component of the city's Talking=Teaching campaign designed to help parents and caregivers eliminate the word gap that can leave children two or more years behind their peers by the time they enter kindergarten.

This launch marks the second wave of adoption of the LENA Start model, developed by the LENA Research Foundation through more than two years of piloting with parents. Additional locations for the 2016 rollout are expected to be announced in the coming weeks, and applications are currently being accepted for 2017 initiatives. The initial implementations, begun in spring of this year, were by the [Huntsville, Ala., public school system](#), and by the [San Mateo, Calif., County Library system](#).

In response to a challenge grant funded by a third-party donor and facilitated by the LENA Research Foundation, the University of Minnesota has secured \$100,000 of matching funds from [Think Small](#), an early-learning-focused nonprofit based in St. Paul, Minn. Additional supporting funds have been proposed by Mayor Hodges in the city's 2016 budget.

To hold the classes, the Department of Educational Psychology of the University of Minnesota has joined with The Family Partnership (TFP), a 137-year-old organization that addresses the impact of poverty and assists families and children. Classes will initially be offered in the TFP's neighborhood service centers and, as the program is established, will then expand through other partners and sites over time.

"The LENA Start model is laser-focused on simple, practical ways to help parents improve talk with their babies," said Dr. Stephen Hannon, president of the LENA Research Foundation. "Mayor Hodges and our partners at the University of Minnesota, The Family Partnership, and Too Small understand the need, which is why we're thrilled that they're joining us in helping parents help their children."

LENA Start uses an efficient parent group model to reach as many families as possible in a given area, at an affordable cost. It consists of five integrated components:

- The patented LENA System™, which monitors quantity and quality of talk with infants and toddlers, providing regular feedback to parents and program providers.
- An engaging parent curriculum called Smarter Happier Baby™, which quickly and clearly teaches caregivers how to build babies' brains through early language (all materials in both English and Spanish).
- Practical Talking Tips™ and shared book reading to transform participants' home environments.
- A web-based data system to give secure access to all stakeholders anywhere, anytime, and to streamline program administration.
- Text reminders that manage parent communications and reinforce motivation for behavior change.

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About the LENA Research Foundation

The LENA Research Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity based in Boulder, Colorado. Its mission is to accelerate language development to improve the cognitive, social, and emotional health of children birth to five and close achievement gaps. The LENA System™, developed at a cost of more than \$40 million contributed by co-founders Terrance and Judith Paul, measures a child's language environment and provides vital feedback to parents and professionals, and is used by researchers and clinicians all over the world. The foundation's LENA Start™ parent-directed intervention program uses LENA feedback and group parenting classes to help improve the home language environment for at-risk children birth to 3. For information, contact Beth Dresser at 303-441-9048, or email bethdresser@lenafoundation.org.