

VIRGINIA  
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST  
NETWORK

“Achieving Excellence in Early Care”  
[www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)



## Have you heard...?

That research suggests the amount of back-and-forth conversation that young children experience is linked to:

- brain development
- language skills
- social and emotional development

Early language exposure, in particular interactive talk, is one of the strongest predictors of brain development. The amount of language interaction a child experiences affects brain processing speed, structure and function, IQ and language abilities years later, as well as additional vocabulary. Vocabulary at age three drives language and reading skills at age 9-10, which, in turn, strongly predict high-school graduation rates.<sup>1</sup>

The VA ITSN partners with LENA Grow to provide a free, innovative, and effective professional development program for child care providers.

- LENA Grow is a 10-week professional development program for early childhood providers that uses advanced technology to help them learn about patterns of talk in their child care environments.
- During a “LENA Day,” all participating children wear a LENA “talk pedometer” to measure the amount of talk that providers use when

interacting with children during their normal routine.

- Providers will meet with a coach weekly to discuss feedback which is based on data gathered using talk pedometers.
- Coaches provide tips and assist providers with setting their own goals to increase interactive talk in their environment!
- All LENA Grow professional development services are provided at no cost.



Are you interested in learning more about how you can build a baby's brain by talking with them?

Click the link to hear what **teachers think**.

Contact: Crystal Skeeter-Davis at [crystalsd@cdr.org](mailto:crystalsd@cdr.org) for more information.

1. Effectiveness research courtesy of LENA Grow, citations available upon request

[Click here to request on-site services online now!](#)



## Resource Spotlight:

A graphic for Farm to CACFP Week. It features a central white box with the text "FARM TO CACFP WEEK" in large, bold, blue letters, and "October 18-22, 2021" below it. The background is light green with illustrations of various vegetables like an apple, corn, and leafy greens. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for the Virginia Child and Adult Care Food Program, featuring a red apple with a white fork and the text "VIRGINIA CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM" and "farm to CACFP".

**FARM TO  
CACFP WEEK**  
October 18-22, 2021

**Farm to CACFP Week - October 18-22:** Join us in recognizing National Farm to School Month with a whole week dedicated to celebrating the CACFP! Farm to CACFP connects early and adult care participants to educational activities that incorporate nutrition education, local and seasonal food, and gardening, all while supporting Virginia agriculture. We invite you to get creative in planning events at your center or home and incorporate local items into your menu during the week. Register [here](#) for the free digital toolkit, full of menu ideas, promotional materials, activities, book suggestions, and more!

## Upcoming PD Opportunity

Institute for early care administrators who serve infants and toddlers!

# Babies, Tots & Talk 2021

Coming to Richmond November 6th!

The Place at Innsbrook  
4036 Cox Road - Suite C  
Glen Allen, VA 23060



This exciting professional development institute will help early care administrators strengthen their communication practices and support staff communication which are essential to child care quality and program sustainability.

**Our keynote speaker, Brittane Robinson, will provide information about the cutting-edge brain science behind the power of early talk, and its impacts in various child care settings. Participants will discover methods to intentionally approach interactive communication with infants and toddlers through LENA's 14 Talking Tips.**

**During the workshop session, *Let's Talk Tough Topics*, we will discuss ways to prepare for and have difficult conversations with families or staff that include challenging issues.**

**Workshop session, *Small Talk: Improving Your Program's Language Environment*, will explore the LENA Grow program, a professional development program for child care teachers which focuses on increasing interactive talk and brain development with infants and toddlers by actually measuring the amount of talk occurring in a classroom.**

### Institute Agenda

8:00 am - 8:30 am	Registration
8:30 am - 9:45 am	Welcome and Keynote
9:45 am - 11:00 am	Workshop Sessions
11:00 am - 11:15 am	Break
11:15 am - 12:30 pm	Workshop Sessions
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Panel Discussion and Closing Session

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**For more information or  
to register online, please visit  
[www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)**

Question? Call (757) 378 - 3168 | Registration fee: \$30 per person | Training hours will be awarded

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[Click here to register for the Directors Institute](#)

## Did you know...?

Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), Birth-Five Learning Guidelines are

the blueprint for preparing every child to enter school ready to thrive! To ensure all educators are equipped to effectively use the new standards and promote school readiness for all of Virginia's littlest learners, VDOE is adding to its **ELDS Implementation Toolkit**. Resources will include foundational documents such as standards crosswalks, introductory and implementation guidance ([view the pre-recorded video](#)), domain specific (i.e., ELDS focus areas) instructional tools and other related supports. These resources will be accessible from the [VDOE Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction webpage](#) this month and updates will continue throughout the year.

**Important Reminder:** Effective Fall 2021, the ELDS are the early learning guidelines for all birth to five programs, replacing the Milestones and Foundation Blocks documents.

For questions related to ELDS implementation or resources contact:  
[Rebecca.Shaffer@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Shaffer@doe.virginia.gov).



## Did you know...?

Bluefield College is now **Bluefield University!**

They offer a wide variety of online degrees for working adults, both undergraduate level and graduate level. Some of the online degrees offered include:

- Master degrees in Counseling and Education
- Bachelor degrees in Early Childhood Education, Psychology and Human Services
- Associate degree in Early Childhood Education

Those who live in Virginia & are seeking a bachelor's degree may be eligible for the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant worth \$2000. Those who get reimbursement for their tuition from their employer do not pay upfront but pay when they are reimbursed by their employer each semester. The application link is available [here](#).

For any questions, contact:

Brenda Workman  
Associate Director of Online Recruitment & Corporate Partnerships  
276-326-4412  
[bworkman@bluefield.edu](mailto:bworkman@bluefield.edu)



*A nonprofit agency changing the lives of babies, toddlers & their families*

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