

GHA Hosts Pilot Site of LENA Start Program

The most critical brain development in children takes place during the early childhood years and by the age of five, 85 percent of a child’s brain has already developed. Research has examined these important initial years, and has discovered that children who lag behind in language development early on are at a disadvantage for their futures and the roots of socio-economic inequality start to take form. All the research points to the same conclusion—that getting a child ready for school and life, starts at birth.

Through a partnership with a local early childhood support organization, *Ready for School, Ready for Life*, Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) became a Guilford County pilot site for an innovative program called LENA Start. This 13-week curriculum aims to educate and instruct parents of children between zero and 30 months on how to accelerate language development in their child to close achievement gaps and improve the cognitive, social and emotional health of children.

Starting in October of 2017, participants from GHA’s communities began a journey of learning about the future impacts that parents already have on their children. Participants met once a week for interactive instruction, learning strategies supported by scientific data to engage with their children. One of the unique features of LENA Start is the ability to give feedback to the parent about their level of interaction with their child. LENA provides a vest and recording device that the child wears capturing a full day of talk. The recordings are translated into data and included in reports that summarize the amount of engagement with the child. This feedback helps parents increase the quantity and quality of interactive talk using strategies learned in class.

On January 30, 2018, GHA held their first graduation celebration for the program. Five participants and their children received a certificate of completion followed by a celebration and a time for reflection about the experience. Participants described the impact the program has already made on their interactions with their children and discussed new positive habits that have formed. GHA anticipates another cycle of LENA in the coming year.



Several LENA participants pose for a photo with their instructors



CEO, Tina Akers Brown and FSS Coordinator, Stormi Covington, present certificate of completion to LENA Start participants