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City of Birmingham, Birmingham Talks partner on historic \$1M early learning investment

The City of Birmingham has announced plans to invest \$1M in early literacy initiatives executed by Birmingham Talks. This is the single largest municipally funded early childhood investment in the history of the City of Birmingham. Birmingham Talks improves kindergarten readiness by increasing interactive conversation between children and their caregivers through the use of a small digital device (a “word pedometer”) that counts the number of words children hear each day.

Funding from the City of Birmingham will help scale Birmingham Talks’ programs over the next three years and ensure that more families and childcare centers have access to award-winning curriculum, innovative technology, and personalized coaching. “Children in Birmingham deserve the very best from the very beginning,” said Ruth Ann Moss, Executive Director of Birmingham Talks. “We’re honored to work with the City to expand access to high-quality early learning services in all ninety-nine neighborhoods—and make Birmingham the best city in the country to raise a child under five.”

Birmingham Talks was founded in 2019 with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies and The Overton Project. Bloomberg Philanthropies provided a seminal three-year grant to five American cities, including Birmingham, to replicate Providence Talks, a former winner of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Mayors Challenge. “We’re grateful for the support from Bloomberg Philanthropies that made Birmingham Talks possible,” says Mayor Randall L. Woodfin. “We hope that this is a message to philanthropic leaders around the country: if you invest in Birmingham, we will build on that investment.”

Ninety-two percent of children who participate in Birmingham Talks start off hearing less than the 21,000 words a day researchers estimate are needed for optimal brain development. However, data shows that children who started the program in lower-talk environments increased the amount of conversation they were exposed to by approximately 50% over the course of twelve weeks.



Funding from the City of Birmingham will cover approximately a quarter of the costs associated with program expansion. Other vital supporters of Birmingham Talks include the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, the Altec/Styslinger Foundation, PNC Bank, the Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, and a variety of other committed local and national funders. “This is an investment in children and families,” said Galvin Billups, Executive Director of the City of Birmingham’s Department of Youth Services. “And it’s also an investment in the future prosperity of our city. Birmingham is committed to ensuring our youngest citizens are able realize their fullest potential.” To learn more about Birmingham Talks, visit bhmtalks.org or email hi@bhmtalks.org.

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About Birmingham Talks

Birmingham Talks supports the future stability and prosperity of our city by focusing on our most precious resource—our children. The organization’s innovative programs use cutting-edge technology and personalized coaching to increase interactive talk between babies and their caregivers—ensuring all the children in our community are prepared for both kindergarten and a life of economic mobility. Research shows that the earliest support helping kids develop language skills can have the most positive and cost-effective lifelong impacts.

Founded in 2019 and seeded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Birmingham Talks runs two signature programs: LENA Start (small group parent classes) and LENA Grow (professional development for childcare centers). For more information on Birmingham Talks visit bhmtalks.org or email hi@bhmtalks.org.