

LENA Grow Noise Recommendations

Impact of Noise on Language Development

Children need to hear and understand what others say to learn. Noisier classrooms can make this hard.

Noisier classrooms can cause issues with how children:

- Understand speech
- Learn language
- Develop pre-reading skills
- Pay attention

Noisier classrooms reduce quality language interactions.

- The louder teachers have to talk, the less likely they are to engage in dialogue with children.
- Children in quieter classrooms are more likely to speak in complete sentences.
- Children are better understood by others in quieter classrooms.

Addressing Noise in the Classroom

Noise in the classroom is caused by more than children talking. Research shows that background noise, acoustics, and reverberation are directly linked to high noise levels.

All children do better in quieter classrooms. A quiet room is even more important for children who have:

- Hearing loss
- Ear infections or fluid in the ear
- Learning disabilities
- Attention problems
- Speech and language delays and/or
- Sensory issues

Teachers do better in classrooms with less noise, too.

- Teachers use their voices for about 60% of the day.
- Talking in a loud room can strain a teacher's voice and has been linked to high stress.



Simple ways to make a room quieter:

Reduce

- Turn off noisy equipment when not in use. For example: limit use of fans and noise machines.
- Designate a time and space to play music.
- Keep windows and doors closed to limit noise from outside and in the hall.

Engage

- Have a staff meeting to discuss and identify major sources of noise and solutions.
- Try to align small group activities based on noise level. For example: try to avoid having a quiet book activity with some children at the same time as a louder circle time with other children.
- Speak to children within 2-4 feet, face-to-face at a normal level. Physically move closer to the child – proximity to the child can help with behaviors and will reduce noise and voice volume in the room.

Enhance

- Add carpet or rugs to the floor.
- Put something on the bottoms of chairs and tables. Chair socks, felt, and baby socks are great latex-free options.
- Repair/ replace malfunctioning fluorescent lights.
- Use bookshelves as room dividers to create quiet spaces.
- Put curtains or blinds on windows.
- Hang soft materials on the walls – felt, corkboard, or quilts.
- Place tables at an angle instead of in rows (limits sound from bouncing around the room).
- NAEYC recommends creating a “soft space” in each room for children to read or play quietly; items like pillows, bean bags and an armchair can help absorb sound.



Invest

- Install suspended acoustical tiles – this can significantly reduce noise levels and reverberation (average 5 dB decrease).
- Poorly designed HVAC systems can be a major source of noise – retrofitting loud systems can be expensive but has been shown to drastically improve learning outcomes.