

# Head Start Coaching Study: Design Phase, 2012-2014

## Project Overview

The project will develop design options for a research study providing evidence for the most efficient practices in coaching within the context of Head Start professional development systems. Coaching is one mechanism through which professional development services are delivered to the early care and education workforce. The content and goals of coaching may vary by mentee/mentor, programmatic need, and model used. Theories differ regarding the mechanisms for changing teacher/staff skills and knowledge and thus there are markedly different coaching and mentoring approaches across the early care and education field. Coaching may vary in the focus on relationship within the interaction, and on factors such as supervisory involvement and strategies used. Despite the many variations, coaching is an increasingly ubiquitous tool for staff development in the early education field. However, resource constraints in the early care and education systems impose limits on the types of practices that are feasible in these settings. It is essential to identify the key elements of coaching that result in improvements in early childhood teachers' skills.

The project will pursue discussions with Head Start program staff in early 2014, to gather program feedback on the design and methods developed for the potential coaching study. Information from these sessions will be used to refine the study questions and ensure feasibility of the methods proposed.

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