

## Supporting Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy Within RTT-ELC Grants

This resource was prepared in response to a request for information about what States with Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants are doing to support coaching as a professional development strategy. This information will be helpful to other States as they explore ways to support early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

---

*Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group.*

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and  
the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies<sup>1</sup>

---

Recent research on professional development for early childhood professionals has shown that the most effective strategies for supporting and reinforcing teaching and learning in early education settings include training that is coupled with opportunities for coaching and mentoring. This understanding is reflected in the coaching-related activities that the 20 RTT-ELC grantees have implemented to support the practices of early childhood educators.

To address this request, ELC TA reviewed the most recent RTT-ELC data available. In the spring of 2016, the 20 RTT-ELC States submitted 2015 *RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports* (APR) to the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services detailing their grant work in 2015. In their RTT-ELC applications, all State were required to focus at least some portion of their State plans and budgets on workforce-related projects. States addressed one or both components of Focused Investment Area D, to support their early childhood education workforce. The two components of this focused investment area were:

- Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and Progression of Credentials (D1)
- Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving Their Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (D2)

---

<sup>1</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies. *NAEYC and NACCRRA Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*. 2011. [http://www.naeyc.org/GlossaryTraining\\_TA.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/GlossaryTraining_TA.pdf)

## Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy Within RTT-ELC Grants

The following examples are a representative sample of the innovative workforce activities related to coaching that States described in their 2015 APRs. These examples include coordinating coaching at the State level; collaborating on development/implementation of competencies, credentials, and models for coaching; providing professional development for coaches; and evaluating the coaching model.

This document does not include all RTT-ELC coaching initiatives. Some States may have initiatives that they completed in previous years, and some States may not have planned to begin their initiatives until 2016 after the 2015 APRs were submitted. In addition, States may have other coaching activities that they did not include in their APRs because those initiatives were not funded by their RTT-ELC grants.

## Coaching Initiatives Funded by RTT-ELC Grantees

---

### Coordinated Coaching at the State Level

**Coaching Coordinator:** In one State (**Wisconsin**), Regional Coordination Coaches provide “air traffic control” at a regional level by coordinating system development, trainings, technical assistance opportunities, and other relevant activities in each of six regions across the State and through the corresponding six Regional Action Teams.

### Collaboration on the Development/Implementation of Competencies, Credentials, and Models for Coaching

**Competency Framework:** In 2015, three States worked on competency frameworks for technical assistance providers, including coaches.

- **Colorado** built coaching into their Early Childhood Competencies Framework.
- **Vermont** was in the process of creating a framework.
- **Wisconsin** finalized the *Wisconsin Training and Technical Assistance Professional (T-TAP) Competencies for Early Childhood and Related Professionals Working with Adults*, which includes coaching.

**Credential and Endorsements:** In 2015, three States created statewide credentials that included coaches.

- **Colorado** launched a competency based Coaching Credential.
- **Illinois** was developing a Technical Assistance Credential.
- **North Carolina** established a Technical Assistance Endorsement for those who provide technical assistance, coaching, and mentoring for teachers and administrators in early childhood settings.

**Support for Early Childhood Professionals through Coaching:** In 2015, five States provided coaches to support specific areas of professional development or curriculum implementation.

## *Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy Within RTT-ELC Grants*

- In **Georgia**, coaches provide support to professionals as they moved up the Georgia Professional Development Hierarchy.
- **Minnesota** coaches support providers who serve children with special needs. In addition, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Coaches and Quality Coaches for Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provided coaching and/or technical assistance to programs participating in Minnesota QRIS.
- In **North Carolina**, coaching from a Healthy Social Behavior Specialist using the CSEFEL teaching pyramid framework was available to programs in Transformation Zones.
- **New Mexico** was exploring the Coaching/Mentoring aspects of the New Mexico Pyramid Partnership to support the continuation of the social/emotional development of children in the State.
- In **Vermont**, an Implementation Coach helped program leadership teams track their progress on the stages of implementation of their Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports Program Inventory.

## Professional Development for Coaches

**Professional Development System and Registry:** In 2015, four States worked on their professional development registry so that it included coaches and other technical assistance providers.

- **Colorado** planned to enhance their Professional Development Information System to be able to include coaches starting in 2016.
- **Georgia** began planning to create a coach designation as part of their Trainer Approval system.
- **Minnesota** identified processes for including Accreditation Coaches, Inclusion Coaches, Quality Coaches, and Business Consultants in their Quality Improvement and Registry Tool.
- **Vermont** was working on finalizing their registry format.

**Higher Education Coursework:** In 2015, three States worked with their institutions of higher education to create coursework for coaches and other technical assistance providers.

- **Georgia** was planning to develop a *Foundations of Coaching* course.
- In **Illinois**, five higher education institutions were participating in the pilot of the Technical Assistance Credential.
- **North Carolina** developed a course for graduate students on coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance.

**T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships:** One State (**Minnesota**) made coaches eligible for T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships.

**Training a Cohort of Coaches:** **Vermont's** Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS) promotes the social and emotional well-being of children from birth through age 8. In 2015, Vermont identified two cohorts of Early MTSS trainers and coaches who received on-going professional learning opportunities to inform and support the professional development of site personnel.

**Peer Assistance and Coaching:** In 2015, in one State (**Massachusetts**), experienced professionals supported each other through peer assistance and coaching. Coaches received relationship-based

### *Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy Within RTT-ELC Grants*

training as well as extensive training using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool as their framework.

#### Evaluation of Coaching Model

**Evaluation of the Coaching Model:** In 2015, one State (**Vermont**) was working on a plan to evaluate their M.A.T.C.H. (Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping) competency framework and implementation plan.

Additional data can be found in the individual *2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports* at <https://elc.grads360.org/#program/annual-performance-reports>. The [Appendix](#) lists specific information from the APRs about how each of the States incorporates coaching into their efforts to support early childhood educators.

## Appendix: State Examples

The following table gives specific examples from the 20 individual State *2015 Annual Performance Reports* about how RTT-ELC Grantees use coaching as a strategy to support professional development. These examples are intended to provide information about which States to contact to find out more information rather than to serve as comprehensive examples on coaching. Text in italics is taken verbatim from the Annual Performance Reports. Individual APR Reports are available at <https://elc.grads360.org/#program/grantee-profiles>.

Table 1 Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
Colorado	Competencies Framework	<p><i>Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators (Early Childhood Competencies) are built on a framework of four levels. They begin with the basic knowledge and skills needed to enter the field and progress, according to degree of mastery, to advanced levels of academic preparation and a wide range of experiences. The four levels are cumulative, meaning that early childhood educators at the top level have the skills and knowledge to meet all the competencies in the lower levels. The levels are as follows: ...</i></p> <p><b>Level 4</b> - <i>Demonstrates the skills and knowledge at previous levels plus: Advances the field of early childhood education through advocacy, leadership, teaching, coaching and mentoring.</i></p>
	Coaching Credential	<p><i>In addition to the competency based Early Childhood Professional Credential 2.0, Colorado also launched a competency based Coaching Credential in February 2015. Developed in collaboration with the Colorado Coaching Consortium, the Coaching Credential is a three-tiered credential with requirements aligned to the three levels of the Colorado Coaching Competencies.</i></p>
	Professional Development Information System	<p><i>Enhancements to the Professional Development Information System will include technology to administer the Coaching Credential within the Professional Development Information System including a Coaching Competency Self-Assessment and an Individual Professional Development plan for coaches.</i></p>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
Georgia	Support Professionals	<i>In Georgia's Race to the Top Early-Learning Challenge Grant application, the state laid out plans for a four-tiered approach to Professional Development, called the Georgia Professional Development Hierarchy (GPDH), designed to move Georgia's early childhood educators from the knowledge phase to the high-performing application phase. The hierarchy starts with a broad audience of stakeholder groups and awareness-level content in tier one and becomes more targeted to early childhood educators teaching students birth to age five with focused content that supports high-quality teacher child interactions in the top tiers. As individuals move from tier to tier, professionals begin applying their knowledge of early learning and development to their own instructional approach with support from coaches and mentors. All levels of the hierarchy are embedded in the Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework.</i>
	Training Approval System	<i>In Year Two of the Early Learning Challenge grant, DECAL [Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning] also began contract negotiations and planning with the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning to provide technical assistance on creating a coach designation that will be part of Georgia's Trainer Approval system. The technical assistance will support DECAL's development of the designation, including training processes, certification, rubrics, marketing, and communications</i>
	Higher Education Coursework	<i>In Year Three, DECAL plans to finalize a contract with Clayton Early Learning to develop a Foundations of Coaching course which will be piloted in the spring and summer of Year Three for approximately 40 individuals.</i>
Illinois	Technical Assistance Credential	<i>Using RTT-ELC funds, Illinois is developing three new credentials. These new multi-level credentials are the Family Child Care credential for home care providers, the Family Specialist credential for those who work with and support families, and the Technical Assistance credential for those who work as coaches or mentors.</i>
	Higher education coursework	<i>The Technical Assistance Credential (FCC) pilot: Five higher education institutions are participating in the pilot. Each of these IHE's modified and/or aligned coursework to meet Technical Assistance Credential requirements and educational competencies. This pilot will be completed in December 2016. To date, 75 applications have been received from members of this distinct workforce.</i>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
Massachusetts	Peer Assistance and Coaching	<p>The Peer Assistance and Coaching (PAC) project utilizes the knowledge and experience of early childhood educators and directors to support one another's practices through coaching and feedback. In the PAC model, educators review video recording of classroom practices to learn about effective strategies and receive feedback that can improve educators' competencies. The PAC projects promotes educators' knowledge of EEC's workforce core competencies, supports improved educator practice, and helps to increase workforce retention through peer support. Over a two year period (FY14 and FY15), 38 pairs of coaches and mentees participated in the PAC project. The coaches received specialized training from the regional Educator and Provider Support network via monthly professional learning communities. The coaches received extensive training using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool as their framework as well as relationship-based training.</p> <p>In an effort to systematically embed the PAC coaching model and sustain it, there was a training of trainers (ToT) on the PAC model that occurred in 2015. The ToT consisted of a training series, evaluation and resources for participants. ToT participants included the Educator and Provider Support (EPS) Grantees (a network of statewide professional development providers) and the network of Family Child Care (FCC) providers and other large early education agencies. The PAC online platform will be extended through June 30, 2016. Along with the current PAC users, all five regional EPS grantees will add participants as a pilot to inform the use of the platform for future use in statewide coaching services.</p>
Minnesota	Support professionals - Inclusion Coaches	Coaches, consultants and trainers with expertise in developmental disabilities, special health care needs and behavioral disorders provided services to child care providers participating in Parent Aware who have children with special needs in their care.
	Support professionals - Quality Coaches and CLASS Coaches	Professional Development Advisors continued to work with child care programs participating in Parent Aware needing technical assistance in ensuring the training they have taken or will be taking meet the Parent Aware training indicators. Parent Aware Quality Coaches and [Classroom Assessment Scoring System] CLASS Coaches provided coaching and/or technical assistance to programs participating in Parent Aware.

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
	Coaches in Professional Development System	<i>Qualifications and approval processes were identified for Inclusion Coaches, Accreditation Coaches, MLFCCA Quality Coaches and Business Consultants in Develop, Minnesota's Quality Improvement and Registry Tool. In 2016, child care providers who access this approved coaching can meet specific licensing training hours and Parent Aware training requirements.</i>
	T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships for Coaches	<i>Bachelor Degrees - The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship program continued to see an increase in awards in 2015. We have broadened eligibility criteria so scholarships are now available to administrators, trainers, and coaches as well as classroom staff.</i>
North Carolina	Higher Education Coursework	<i>A course on Coaching, Mentoring, and Technical Assistance has been developed and delivered throughout 2014 and 2015. The success of this course led to a decision to develop a graduate-level three semester credit hour course titled "The Art and Science of Early Childhood Coaching, Mentoring and Technical Assistance". During 2015 a 2 CEU online graduate level course on Coaching, Mentoring and Technical Assistance was developed and is now available for enrollment.</i>
	Coaching Using the CSEFEL Teaching Pyramid Framework	<i>A Healthy Social Behavior (HSB) Specialist in the Transformation Zone is providing technical assistance and training to the ELD programs to improve program capacity to support healthy social/emotional development of children in their care, using the Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) teaching pyramid framework and strategies. Working with county implementation teams, the HSB Specialist recruited ELD programs to apply to participate in the project. Each county formed a cohort and is functioning as a community of practice, convening meetings to delve more deeply into various pyramid model-related topics, and providing coaching across programs.</i>
	Technical Assistance Endorsement	<i>A Technical Assistance Endorsement is now established to provide professional recognition for the education and experience of those who provide technical assistance, coaching and mentoring for teachers and administrators in early childhood settings. The Technical Assistance Endorsement criteria was piloted and finalized. Statewide marketing of the Technical Assistance Endorsement continued in 2015 and 120 endorsements have been issued.</i>



Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
New Mexico	Support Professionals as Part of Pyramid Partnership	<i>The NM Pyramid Partnership roll out of Train the Trainers first began the Spring/Fall 2015 throughout New Mexico. To date, over 350 participants statewide have been trained. In our efforts to expand and sustain NM Pyramid Partnership, the leadership team is exploring the Coaching/Mentoring aspects to support the continuation of the social/emotional development of children in the State, while providing a cross-sector approach for success (PreK, Home Visiting, Child Care, early intervention, preschool special education, Head Start).</i>
Vermont	Competency Framework	<i>IMPLEMENTATION OF M.A.T.C.H. Vermont M.A.T.C.H. (Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping) will create a framework and a process to recognize and support the work of mentoring, coaching, and consulting in early childhood settings. This includes developing a registry of qualified M.A.T.C.H. professionals which will help early childhood professionals and programs identify appropriate individuals to assist with their personal or programmatic goals and needs.</i>
	Evaluate Competency Framework and Implementation Process	<i>In 2014, the CDD contracted with Education Development Center, Inc. to provide expert assistance in the development of a plan to evaluate the implementation of M.A.T.C.H. Over the course of 2015, after intense engagement work with the M.A.T.C.H. Committee stakeholder group, the EDC release a report with recommendations on practices to implement and evaluate M.A.T.C.H. in December 2015. The M.A.T.C.H. implementation team is using this work to finalize detailed policies for M.A.T.C.H. professionals and the organizations that support them.</i>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
	Registry	<p>The Northern Lights Career Development is working with an IT professional to finalize the M.A.T.C.H. registry format that will provide the “face” of M.A.T.C.H. allowing M.A.T.C.H. professionals to be identified and potentially linked with a program or individual that would like to access their expertise as a M.A.T.C.H. professional. In 2016, partner agencies will identify evidence-informed content experts to become identified as M.A.T.C.H. professionals. One of the first goals of these new M.A.T.C.H. professionals will be to provide their expertise to Specialized Child Care programs serving children with high needs.</p>
	Identify and Train Coaches	<p><b>EARLY MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT</b>                      Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS) is a tiered framework of universal promotion, prevention and intervention that promotes the social and emotional well-being of children from birth through age 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In June 2015, informational webinars were conducted to recruit early childhood programs to apply to participate in cohort 2 (2015-16) as well as recruit qualified individuals to join VT's cadre of Early MTSS trainers, systems coaches and practice-based coaches. These webinars remain on-line.</li> <li>• Between November 2014 and March 2015 a state cadre of nine Early MTSS trainers, practice-based coaches, and systems coaches were identified for Cohort 1. In the summer of 2015 Early MTSS identified and added 6 new trainers and coaches for cohort 2. All members of the state cadre of Early MTSS trainers and coaches receive on-going professional learning opportunities to inform and support the professional development of site personnel. The trainers and coaches support the site staff in building program capacity to implement and sustain evidence-based practices that support children's social, emotional and learning development. These practices provide universal supports for all children through nurturing and responsive relationships and high quality environments. Early MTSS also conducts monthly community of practice conference calls.</li> </ul>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
	Support Systems Development - Implementation Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Early MTSS Program Inventory (PI) was developed under the State Personnel Development grant (SPDG4) to assist in the scale up and sustainability of Early MTSS statewide. The PI measure is currently being implemented by all Early MTSS Cohort 1 and 2 sites to assess progress in systems development and plan future actions so that Early MTSS initiatives are implemented with fidelity, are sustainable, and ultimately, benefit children and families. The Program Inventory is grounded in the science of implementation, which bridges the gap between evidenced-based practices (EBP) and high fidelity implementation of that practice. Program Leadership Teams, with support from their BBF councils and an implementation coach, will track their progress on the stages of implementation. The Program Inventory tool can be found in Grads360 under Project 13. Information gathered through the Program Inventory is used to develop action plans specific to each Early MTSS cohort site. The Early MTSS aligns with the Agency of Education K-12 MTSS field guide.</li> <li>Leadership Team members were also asked to rate the impact the system coaching had on their knowledge and skills to work as a Leadership Team member. Respondents reported that the coaching had a lot of impact (average of 4.75 on a five-point scale) on their knowledge and skills to participate on their Leadership Team.</li> </ul>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
Wisconsin	Regional Collaboration Coaches	<p><i>Supported regional Collaboration Coaches in their system coordination roles.</i></p> <p><i>Similar to the role that the Professional Development Coordinator plays at a state level, Coordination Coaches provide critical “air traffic control” at a regional level by coordinating system development, trainings, technical assistance opportunities, and other relevant activities in each of six regions across the state and through the corresponding six Regional Action Teams (five regions plus Milwaukee). Their work increases collaboration, reduces redundancies, identifies gaps for further support, and helps make the system work more efficiently. WI Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) Regional Collaboration Coaches and Networks is a cross department structure supported and aligned with RTT [Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge]. Regional Collaboration Coaches have been in place since 2004 through braided funding efforts between all three Wisconsin state departments to connect, build, and sustain cross sector systems around state and regional priority areas. Through the regional action teams, Collaboration Coaches have enhanced cross sector collaboration in the areas of WI Model Early Learning Standards, Pyramid Model of Social Emotional Competence, Screening and Assessment, Homelessness/Poverty, and other areas. During 2014, the reporting mechanisms for collaboration coaches were refined, and in 2015 data collection and reporting continued to be a focus. Coaches network with regional systems through Regional Action Teams. Regional Action Teams are made up of key representatives from the various early childhood sectors, agencies, and/or associations in each region. Each action team received an increased amount of funding through RTT to support their work. Regional mini-grants were one of the strategies used to allow local programs to benefit from the RTT funds and implement local projects that align with the professional development goals. More detailed efforts of the coaches will also be highlighted in the 2015 PD Consolidated Report. Information about the Coaches and Regional Networks is housed on <a href="http://www.collaboratingpartners.com">collaboratingpartners.com</a>. (See <a href="http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/about.php">http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/about.php</a>).</i></p>

Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants		
Source: Individual State 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports, Focused Investment Area D(1 and 2)		
State	Strategy	APR Language Describing Coaching Strategy
		<i>Coaches also coordinated community of practice in each region to support consistency of regional coordination, improve coordination of training delivery, provide networking opportunities, and share information, updated materials, evidence-based practices, and related resources. These Communities of Practice grew in 2014 to include one-day events with practices meetings for Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards approved trainers in the morning and Pyramid model trainers in the afternoon. Some regions included screening and assessment within their community of practice structure. In 2015, the WMELS/PD coordinators began to regularly attend the communities of practice with the intent of providing a better local-regional-state communication structure for WMELS and cross sector professional development efforts as well as to improve the fidelity and effectiveness of the community of practice structure</i>
	Competencies	<i>In 2015, the Training and Technical Assistance (T-TAP) Competency Workgroup finalized the Wisconsin Training and Technical Assistance Professional (T-TAP) Competencies for Early Childhood and Related Professionals Working with Adults. This is a guide to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that training and technical assistance professionals should have in order to provide high quality training, mentoring, coaching, consultation, and counseling to those who work directly with children and families</i>

## Resource

ELC TA. 2015 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Reports. 2016. Individual State reports can be found at <https://elc.grads360.org/#program/annual-performance-reports>

*This resource was developed as part of the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC TA) Program through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education, run in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. The findings, conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. ELC TA is administered by AEM Corporation. For more information, visit [www.elcta.org](http://www.elcta.org).*