



# Recent Research Findings on Effective Coaching and Professional Development

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**In two language, literacy, and social skills professional development interventions with over 300 teachers in Tennessee, coaches who were particularly successful in helping teachers improve their practice were those who:**

- Had greater knowledge about child development and developmentally appropriate practices.
- Were former teachers themselves with setting/classroom experiences that were applicable to problem-solving strategies for and with the teacher
- Had prior training experiences with adults and understood the unique characteristics of the adult learner
- Understood the organizational structure, schedule, and culture of the setting
- Acknowledged that trust was key to a successful coach-teacher relationship
- Entered the teacher's setting with a sense of respect for what the teacher was already doing and a collaborative attitude about adding to the quality of instruction
- Allowed the teacher to drive the process while still meeting project objectives
- Offered make-up sessions and other alternative scheduling for workshop training and coaching
- Were aware of the need for implementation fidelity of the project objectives/goals while simultaneously addressing the concerns expressed by the teacher about a specific setting."

**The following "emerging" principles of effective professional development were gleaned from a review of a large number of studies of early childhood education professional development:**

- Professional development interventions that are delivered in more intensive and extensive ways are associated with better outcomes for educators and children; however, success can be found in shorter, less intense programs as well.

- The appropriateness of the intensity/duration of the professional development intervention depends on the goals of the professional development.
- Professional development targeted on a discrete set of skills may only require short-term and brief professional development activities.
- Professional development that has a broad focus or that covers more complex content may require the provision of more background on children's development and, therefore, more extensive professional development activities, perhaps spread over time.
- Professional development that is geared toward teaching early childhood educators new skills may require professional development models of more intensity and/or longer duration.
- Sustainability of practices acquired through professional development may require periodic infusions of additional professional development and on-site support.
- Characteristics of the educators receiving the professional development (including the educators' readiness to change attitudes and practices), as well as the characteristics and previous training of those delivering the professional development, and the potential match between the two, need to be taken into account in order to determine the appropriate delivery of professional development.
- A supportive educational environment is beneficial for the educators involved in a professional development program. Support from other educators, directors, and principals can lead to better outcomes in the classroom.

*Reference:*

Neuman, S.B., & Kamil, M.L. (Eds.). (2010). *Preparing teachers for the early childhood classroom: Proven models and key principles*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.