



**ROLLINS CENTER/YMCA READ RIGHT FROM THE START  
PROJECT**

**COACHING PROGRAM EVALUATION  
(2012-2014)**

**Report submitted to:**

*Atlanta Speech School:*

*Rollins Center for Language and Literacy*

**Report submitted by:**

*Gary E. Bingham, Ph.D & Nicole Patton-Terry, Ph.D..*



**COLLEGE  
OF EDUCATION**



**URBAN CHILD  
STUDY CENTER**  
*The future is ours to develop.*



## **Introduction**

Research on professional development for early childhood educators clearly illustrates that training teachers to effectively implement new pedagogical approaches is a complex and challenging endeavor (Jackson et al., 2007; Maxwell, Field, & Clifford, 2006). Even when content is delivered effectively, teachers often vary in their implementation of such content (Ginsburg et al., 2006; Powell, Diamond, Burchinal, & Koehler, 2010). For example, in a study evaluating teachers' implementation of a new early childhood curriculum, Children's School Success, Lieber and colleagues (2009) found that teachers could be categorized on a continuum of fidelity to the curriculum, from low to high that related to teachers improvement of targeted practices across the school year. Based upon teachers' fidelity ranking, they noted significant differences between the receptivity of teachers in different conditions with low fidelity teachers offering fewer high quality activities for children in comparison to high fidelity teachers. However, it should be noted that recent research examining the relation between the fidelity of teachers' implementation of language literacy curriculum and evaluations of the quality of language and literacy instruction occurring in classrooms demonstrates that faithfully implementing a curriculum (i.e., high fidelity), in and of itself, does not always guarantee high quality classrooms (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008; Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, Justice, & Pianta, 2010). For example, in a research study evaluating the impact of an early language and literacy curriculum Justice and colleagues (2008) found an association between fidelity measures (evaluating routines and instruction) and assessments of classroom literacy instruction (i.e., teaching print), but no relationship between fidelity and language instruction (i.e., the quality of teacher talk).

Professional Development (PD) opportunities appear key to helping teachers improve their instructional practices, with some models of PD are more effective than others (Wasik & Hindman, 2011). Traditionally, professional development models that are implemented with teachers take place solely outside of the classroom, in a stand and deliver format in which the teachers are passive participants. Research indicates that models of PD that incorporate in classroom work with a coach or mentor are proving to be effective alternatives to the traditional model (Powell, Steed & Diamond, 2013; Wasik & Hindman, 2011; Hsieh, et al., 2009; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Landry et al., 2009). Recent research suggests that in order to change teachers' language and literacy practices, teachers must receive intensive and targeted professional development opportunities that include onsite, or distance, coaching (Neuman & Wright, 2010; Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). An important component of coaching is the fact that teachers receive individual support while implementing evidence-based practices in their classrooms in comparison to workshops (or other stand and deliver professional development programs) that often leave teachers with the complex job of implementing recommended practices with limited, in classroom, support (Powell, Steed, & Diamond, 2010). Although recent research has pointed to coaching as the "active ingredient" by which teachers change their instructional practices (see Wasik & Hindman, 2011), few studies make clear connections between coaching activities and teacher change.



## **Purpose**

The purpose of the present study was to examine a professional development model, *Read Right from the Start*, with particular focus on the ways in which professional development was provided to teachers through literacy coaches and the relation between exposure to the approach and the quality of early childhood teachers' language and literacy practices. Two central questions addressed by this evaluation study were: "What are literacy coaches experiences with providing teachers with professional development and in class support?" and "How does coaching relate to variability in teachers' implementation of language and literacy instruction?"

## **Read Right from the Start**

The Rollins Center for Language & Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta partnered to implement *Read Right from the Start: Georgia Pre-K Professional Development Project* in Metro YMCA early childhood classrooms. Read Right (as it is referred to hereafter) is a research-based professional development initiative focused on strengthening and enriching the language and literacy development of young children by providing intensive training sessions, seminars, coaching, and mentoring to pre-k teachers and teacher assistants. As a scientifically based literacy and language approach Read Right is aimed to improve teachers' instruction quality, enhance their language and literacy interaction with children as well as empower children's oral language and code-focused skills such as phonological and print awareness, letter recognition. Increasing children's vocabulary and comprehension skills through meaningful conversations and repeated storybook reads is arguably essential to boosting children's oral language development (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

For the purpose of this evaluation study, we examined teachers' implementation of the following Read Right strategies: TALK, START reads, REAL time, and PAC time. These strategies were targeted because teachers were or had received professional development and coaching with each strategy. Three of these strategies focus on ways in which teachers might increase children's early language and comprehension skills by focusing on meaningful conversations and book reading routines aimed at increasing vocabulary, world knowledge and emergent comprehension. Meaningful conversations are promoted through the TALK strategy that includes four steps designed at improving children's language development: (T) "tuning in" (A) "asking questions" (L) "lifting the language", and (K) "keeping it going". Teachers are highly recommended to use TALK strategies throughout the day, but particularly during free choice/center time to promote conversations that lead to learning. Teachers use of interactive, repeated story reads are captured in their START reads. During a START, sophisticated book reading, teachers "push in" key information connected to the story that includes: connecting key events, inferring story problems and main ideas, inferring characters' thoughts and feelings and understanding. During the third read, teachers encourage children to retell this information by "pulling out" key



information in ways that promote children’s thinking and language skills. The acronym START is used to help teachers focus on following steps during the read aloud, such as: (S) “state” title and author along with the purpose for reading the story, (T) “teach” aspects of the story, key events, thoughts and targeted vocabulary, (A) “ask” open-ended questions, (R) “respond” to children to lead thoughtful answers and (T) “tie” altogether telling children the main idea. Along with START strategy, REAL time is designed to increase children’s understanding and vocabulary by building world knowledge through informational or nonfiction text.

In addition to comprehension and language development strategies, Read Right focuses on children’s code-based skill development. This is accomplished through teachers’ implementation of the PAC time strategy. PAC time is an acronym for teachers’ instruction including the following skills: (P) phonological awareness, (A) alphabet knowledge, and (C) concepts of print. In PAC time, teachers implement varying instruction that is intended to be in-tune with children’s emergent literacy skills in each area in an interactive, yet intentional way. Teachers are encouraged to implement PAC time instructional routines 3 times a week.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The fundamental purpose of this evaluation study was to examine the Read Right coaching model as being implemented by Rollins’ facilitators and YMCA literacy coaches in order to better understand the coaching process and the possible impact that coaching has on teacher behavior. We approach the evaluation with attention to three principals: dosage, adherence, and quality (Hamre, Justice, Pianta, Kilday, Sweeney, Downer, & Leach, 2010). Dosage represents the amount of time or exposure that teachers had to coaching with Read Right. Adherence allows us to examine how teachers adhered to (or were faithful to) Read Right strategies in their classrooms as well as how YMCA literacy coaches adhered to the Rollins coaching model. Quality reflects the general instructional quality that is offered by classroom teachers in this study. For this evaluation study, we were interested in how Read Right dosage related to teacher adherence and quality. With this in mind, this study was guided by the following specific aims:

1. To explore ways in which both facilitators and coaches spoke about their roles. This study focused specific attention on identifying promising practices, shared challenges and successes, and unique experiences inherent in improving teachers’ implementation of Read Right from the Start strategies.
2. To describe the YMCA coaches’ practices within Read Right with attention to how much time they spent (e.g., dosage) providing support to teachers and what component skills were being emphasized during such coaching sessions.

- 
3. To examine associations among the amount (e.g., time spent) and nature of literacy coaches reported practices and teachers' implementation (e.g., adherence) of Read Right from the Start strategies (e.g., TALK, START, REAL, and PAC).
  4. To examine associations among the amount and nature of literacy coaches reported practices and the quality of teachers' instructional practices (as measured by the CLASS and ELLCO).
  5. To offer recommendations about promising coaching strategies and approaches with attention to next steps in implementing Read Right from the Start.

### **Challenges to the Evaluation**

There were considerable challenges with evaluating the Rollins' facilitator and YMCA literacy coaches' practices and experiences. Some of this challenge can be traced to diversity that existed both within and across these sites. Sites are diverse not only in their student body (e.g., socioeconomic status, language ability at the beginning of the school year), but also programmatically (e.g., Head Start/Early Head Start, Georgia Pre-K, Teach for America,) and physically (e.g., geographic location, size of the center). In addition, because each site operates with some independence from the central YMCA office and Rollins facilitators and YMCA coaches are employed by different agencies, some negotiations of expectations and experiences is expected.

Further, and most immediate to the quality of the data presented in this report, it is important to note that all coaching data were dependent on (1) self-reported experiences of Rollins' facilitators and YMCA literacy coaches and (2) the nature of coaching data that were supplied to Georgia State University from the coaches regarding the frequency and focus of their coaching strategies and time spent in classrooms. For instance, coaches often did not use a standardized format when reporting their coaching behaviors and this made it extremely challenging to consistently evaluate and code coaches' behaviors in ways that captured the breadth and complexity of the coaching experiences. Further, the amount of detail that was captured on these forms was relatively limited. Although we made requests for richer coaching data that would have been possibly contained on coaches' action plans or progress monitoring forms, these data were not provided to the evaluation team (and do not appear to have been collected in a systematic way by Rollins during the course of this evaluation study). Finally, although we have standardized observational data examining the quality of teachers' practices, observations of coaching practices were not practical given the dynamic nature of the coaching process and the limited budget of this evaluation study.. Given these constraints, in this evaluation study, we link literacy coaches' self-reported practices to teachers' actual/observed classroom practices.

Although concerns exist about the quality of the self-reported data, additional steps were taken to ensure that these data were a valid representation of coach's experiences and practices. One way that we tried to ensure valid data was through triangulation of the



data. Specifically, we use multiple data sources (Coach's logs, Facilitator interviews, Coach interviews) as a way to get at the data in multiple ways. In addition, we undertook this study using a mixed method approach, which allowed us to look both quantitatively at the data (e.g., teachers' classroom quality, self-reported frequency (dosage) of literacy coaching) and qualitatively (interviews of facilitators and coaches) in order to best describe and assess the literacy coaching model given the constraints listed above. This approach helps to increase the trustworthiness of the data in light of existing limitations in literacy coaches' self-reported practices.

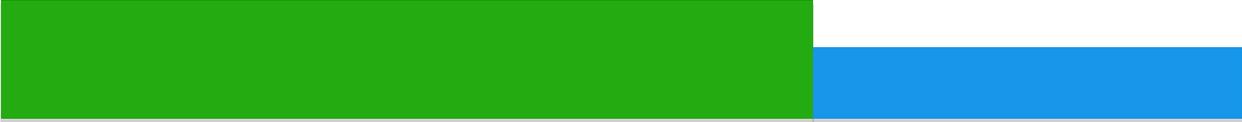
### **Project Timeline**

This project took place over the course of two years starting in the middle of the 2012-2013 school year and ending the spring of 2014. Although teacher data are available for two academic years (e.g., 2012-2013 and 2013-2014), full and complete coaching data were only available to the researchers for approximately 18 months of this project. Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report span 1.5 school years.

### **Demographics**

Data for this report were collected at three levels of involvement. At the first level are Rollins Facilitators who developed and provided the professional development learning opportunities to YMCA Literacy Coaches and to YMCA Preschool and Prekindergarten teachers. Their involvement over the course of this project changed slightly as a result of ELearning becoming a more viable professional development tool for some sites across the 18 month study period. A total of four Rollins Facilitators were interviewed for this study. Three of these facilitators provided direct support to YMCA literacy coaches and professional development to teachers, while the fourth was slightly more distal from the facilitators participation in the project through her involvement in curriculum development for live and online training.

The second level of this project concerned the primary implementers of the Rollins Coaching Model, the YMCA literacy coaches. A total of 7 literacy coaches, all women, participated in this study 18 months. Four of the seven coaches reported obtaining a Master's degree, while three reported having obtained a bachelor's degree. Many of the coaches reported having served as classroom teachers before becoming a literacy coach. Coaches' teaching experiences ranged from 0 years teaching to 20 years, with the average time spent in the classroom being 7 years. Many of the coaches were relatively inexperienced at both supervising adults and serving a coaching capacity before the beginning of this project. Coaches reported, on average, 2 years of experience as a coach (Range = 1-4 years), with only two coaches reporting supervisory experience before becoming a literacy coach.



The third level involved a total of 48 preschool and prekindergarten teachers who participated in this study from 2012-2014 school years. Some of these teachers repeated involvement, while others dropped out of the sample and were replaced by other teachers in varying stages of professional development. Because of sample attrition, classroom level data is only available for a smaller group of teachers (N = 30). The varied involvement of teachers across the timeframe of this study may contribute to the perceptions that the total number of teachers in the report appear contradictory. Whenever possible, we use the maximum number of teachers in all analyses. For example, we analyze or include all coaching data for a coach when she worked with a teacher during any period of time during the 18 months for which we have data. When analyzing teacher growth, from fall to spring of the school year, please note that we are working with much smaller numbers of teachers, as teachers sometimes were not the same in each classroom across the course of the project. Teachers are not included in growth analyses if (1) they moved or left the center or (2) they declined to participate in the project for another year.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

The following steps were taken to recruit teachers, literacy coaches and Rollins facilitators. Teachers were consented at the beginning of each year of participation in the project while literacy coaches were consented at a meeting of the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy. Facilitators were consented individually when they participated in a one-on-one interview with the researcher.

### **Confidentiality: Protecting the Rights of Research Participants**

As is standard practice in the conduct of ethical research, participation in this evaluation was voluntary. Facilitator, Coach, and Teacher consent was obtained for all participants prior to any classroom observations or interviews, consistent with standard protocols for conducting research at Georgia State University. A critical part of providing consent is the guarantee of confidentiality: with few exceptions, ***no*** identifying information collected during the evaluation process can be shared about any of the participants. Identifying information includes both demographic information (e.g., birthday, gender, race) and data gathered from interviews and classroom observations. Protecting the confidentiality of facilitators, coaches and teachers who volunteered to participate in the evaluation is one of the greatest responsibilities of the research and evaluation team. Therefore, we will not share individual coach or teacher data, but rather include aggregate data from individual classrooms. All data are presented in group form to help protect the identify of those who volunteered and participated in this evaluation study.



## **Classroom Observation**

All teacher observations were completed for the academic years of 2012-2013 and 2013 to 2014. Although this study began midyear in 2012-2013, we include teacher data from this year and the subsequent year (2013-2014) while we only include literacy coach data from January to May of 2013 and from September 2013 to May 2014. Although we have incomplete coaching data for this first year of the study, it provides an adequate baseline of literacy coaches' practices which we link to teachers' classroom practices.

As detailed in other Read Right reports, teachers' instructional practices were evaluated through classroom observations (e.g., CLASS and ELLCO). Ratings on these measures are related to and predictive of children's social, academic, language, and emotional abilities in the classroom. The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008) is an observational measure that allows researchers to evaluate the social-emotional, managerial and organizational, and instructional quality of daily interactions between teachers and students. We also used the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (ELLCO-2; Smith, Brady, & Anastasopoulous, 2008). The ELLCO-2 allowed us to evaluate the quality of the language and literacy environment in each classroom, something not evaluated by the CLASS. Table 1 gives an overview of each measure.

In addition, fidelity checks were undertaken to evaluate teachers uptake of Read Right strategies. The fidelity tool was developed collaboratively by Georgia State University and Rollins Language and Literacy Staff. For this study, we used an abbreviated observational instrument to assess the following strategies: 1) TALK (meaningful conversations), 2) START (repeated interactive storybook reading, 3) PAC (phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and concepts of print), and REAL time (information text read alouds). We do not include our observations of teachers' writing practices in this report as teachers received very little, if any, coaching in creating meaningful writing opportunities for children (see results). Fidelity observations took place during two instructional routines, namely large group story time and free choice (or learning centers) time. The quality of quality of teacher language and adherence to interactive repeated story reads was assessed during large group read aloud times. The quality of teachers' language use and adherence to Read Right principles was also assessed during free choice, or learning center, time.

Although variability across measures of fidelity or classroom quality are expected, due to the measurement error that characterizes all assessments and variability in the nature of how the data were collected, utilizing multiple measures increases the likelihood that the pattern of results obtained is truly representative of the participant's performance.

All classroom observations took place during the morning sessions and lasted approximately 3 hours. In interpreting the findings, it is important to consider that each instrument codes language and literacy constructs differently. For example, the ELLCO-2 produces a summative rating of observed language and literacy instructional quality. In contrast, the CLASS uses time sampling to rate the quality of teacher practice across 20-minute intervals. These intervals are then averaged to create a total score. Therefore, it is possible that the instruments may produce slightly different findings. Additional teacher and classroom data are available in the Appendix.

Table 1. *Teacher and classroom outcome measures.*

Teacher/Classroom	Assessment	Scoring
Instructional Practices	Fidelity Observations	Scores range from 1-3 Consistent = 3
Classroom Quality	Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observations-2 (ELLCO-2)	ELLCO-2: Scores range from 1-5 Basic = 3
	Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	CLASS: Scores range from 1-7

### **Research Methodology**

We used concurrent triangulation strategy, a mixed method model, to design and implement the current study (Creswell, 2003; Hanson et al., 2005). We utilized this strategy to increase the likelihood that our findings would contain both breadth (across sites) as well as depth of experience of multiple stakeholders (e.g., facilitators, literacy coaches and teachers). The quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and were interpreted to note the convergence (or lack thereof) of the findings. Although it is ideal that quantitative and qualitative data have equal priority in a concurrent triangulation strategy, it is more common that greater priority be given to one or the other (Creswell, 2003). In the current study, greater priority is given to the quantitative data while the qualitative data were used to further explain and give depth to the quantitative findings. To this end, quantitative data are presented and discussed first while qualitative data are presented second to give meaning and depth to the quantitative findings.

### **Data Analysis: Quantitative Data**

In order to describe the YMCA coaches' practices within Read Right with attention to how much support they provided teachers and what component skills were being emphasized during coaching sessions, a series of descriptive analyses were generated. These analyses generated data on the frequency and nature of literacy coaches' practices. After we

examined the data we analyzed the extent to which literacy coaches' interactions with teachers across the school year produced measurable change in teachers' literacy and language practices at the end of the project. Finally, we examined whether coaches reported behaviors were related to observed improvement in teachers' instructional strategies.

### **Literacy Coaches Instructional Focus Across Teachers with Varying Years of PD:**

Literacy Coaches self-reported coaching sessions demonstrated considerable variability across literacy coaches and consented classrooms. The total number of minutes reported by coaches ranged considerably across consented classrooms. Coaches reported an average of 3,269 minutes given in coaching support for consenting teachers, with a range of 650 minutes to 11,310 minutes. Variability in coaches reporting can be attributed, in part, to (1) variation in consenting teachers across sites, (2) the possibility that coaches may have over-reported or under-reported their coaching practices and (3) the possibility that coaches spent more time with some teachers in the sample based upon teachers' needs for additional coaching support (i.e., not every teacher needs the same level or intensity of support to effectively implement strategies). In addition, missing data was a challenge of this evaluation study, with some coaches having less data available than others. Finally, because a few YMCA Read Right sites were considerably larger than others, they may have had fewer teachers consenting to participate in research. In other words, larger sites may have had fewer teachers proportionally participating in the research study when compared to smaller sites, despite the fact that YMCA literacy coaches had relatively similar "caseloads" of teachers. A final explanation of the extreme variability in teachers reported coaching touch on consented teachers may be related to coaches' knowledge of the evaluation study. It is possible that certain coaches may have targeted teachers participating in the Read Right evaluation study with extra coaching while targeting other teachers to a lesser degree. Because coaches were aware of who was participating in the larger evaluation study, they may have targeted these teachers in a way that provided them with more opportunities for coaching (and hence, more opportunities for the coach to report this support). All of these factors should be considered in light of reported quantitative findings.

An examination of the coaches reported coaching sessions for consented teachers across various years of Read Right PD are presented in Table 2. As noted in this table, coaches reported the amount of dosage or "touch" they had with teachers across years. As evidenced by the data, the 15 teachers who were in their first year of Read Right training (who consented to participate in this research study) received an average of 14 sessions with the literacy coach across the study. The length of these sessions were considerably longer than for teachers in years 2 or 3 of this PD project. Specifically, teachers in their first year of Read Right received fewer training sessions than teachers in Year 3 of the study, but these sessions lasted twice as long. Such a finding is understandable given the (a) the

relative newness of the teachers to Read Right and (b) the way in which coaches articulated the coaching model to include an “I do, we do, you do” format (see qualitative findings). Teachers in their first year of implementation likely require longer periods of contact with the coaches in order to ensure time for coach modeling, observation and feedback. Teachers in year 3 of the project were receiving shorter sessions, but more frequent check-ins by their literacy coaches. Teachers in the second year of PD received 15 coaching sessions across the project, with each session lasting roughly 32 minutes.

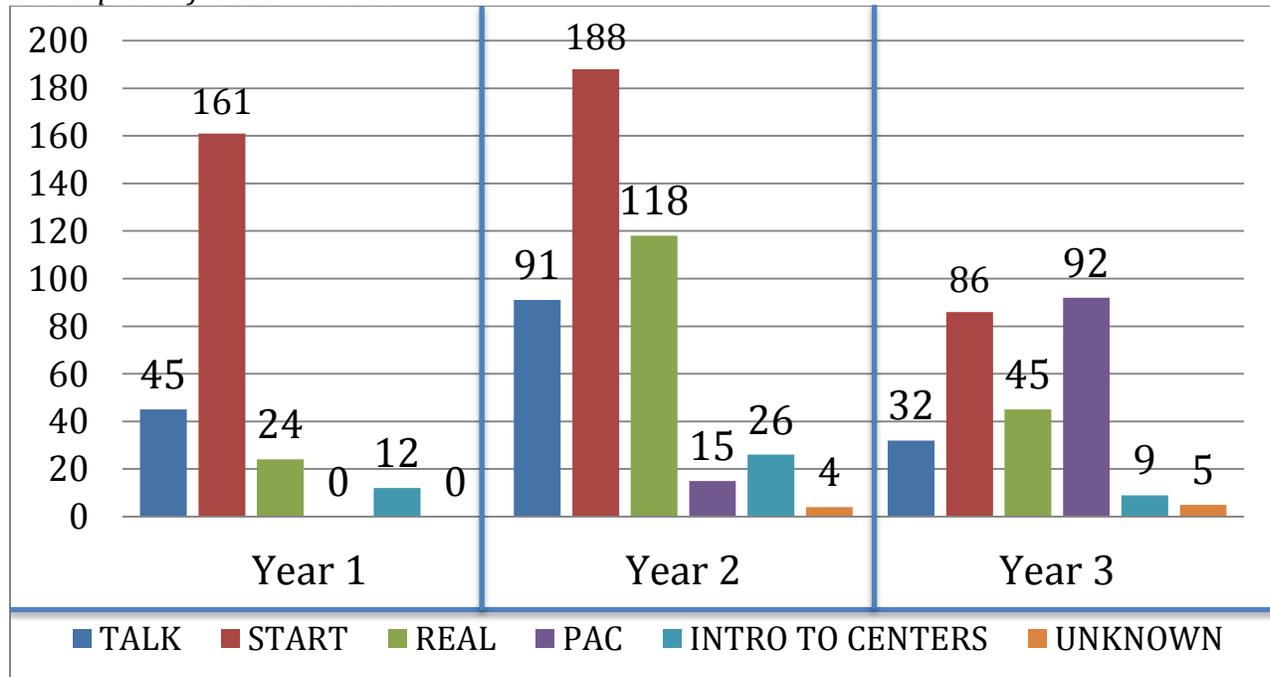
Table 2. *Total Number of Coaching Sessions by Teachers’ Years of Participation*

Year	Number of teachers	Total number of sessions	Average session time in minutes	Average # of sessions per teacher
1	15	215	44.14	14.3
2	22	330	32.08	15
3	13	260	23.00	20

An examination of coaches’ self-reported Read Right coaching focus during individual consultations with consented teachers in varying years of professional development (i.e., teachers participating 1, 2, or 3 years in the project) reveals variability of instructional focus. As is clearly demonstrated in Figure 1, literacy coaches generally subscribed to the Read Right developmental coaching model with its strong focus on starting with repeated book reading strategies (START) and meaningful conversations (TALK) and then moving to an explicit focus on both information texts (REAL Time) and teachers’ phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and concepts of print (PAC Time) instructional strategies. As evidenced by these descriptive data, Year 1 teachers received over 3 times as many coaching sessions focused on their implementation of START strategies (repeated reads) than they did implementing TALK strategies (meaningful conversations). Teachers in year 2 of PD continued to receive support in TALK and START strategies while also being trained on implementing information text reads (REAL Time). Surprisingly, and similar to year 1 of PD, teachers continued to receive the majority of support from coaches in their implementation of repeated reads (START) with informational reads being the second most frequently coached strategy. Year 3 teachers, in comparison to year 1 and year 2 teachers received more balanced support around the 3 existing strategies (TALK, START, & REAL) and focused support around PAC time. Although the information provided helps illustrate the ways in which coaches reported spending their time in classrooms, it also

leads to questions about why coaches were focusing more prevalently on some strategies even after teachers were to have acquired them (START) while focusing less time on helping teachers create meaningful conversations (TALK).

Figure 1. *Read Right Coaching Focus for Teachers Across Various Years of Professional Development for All Coaches.*



**Note:** Teachers in different year categories refers to how long they had been participating in Read Right professional development opportunities.

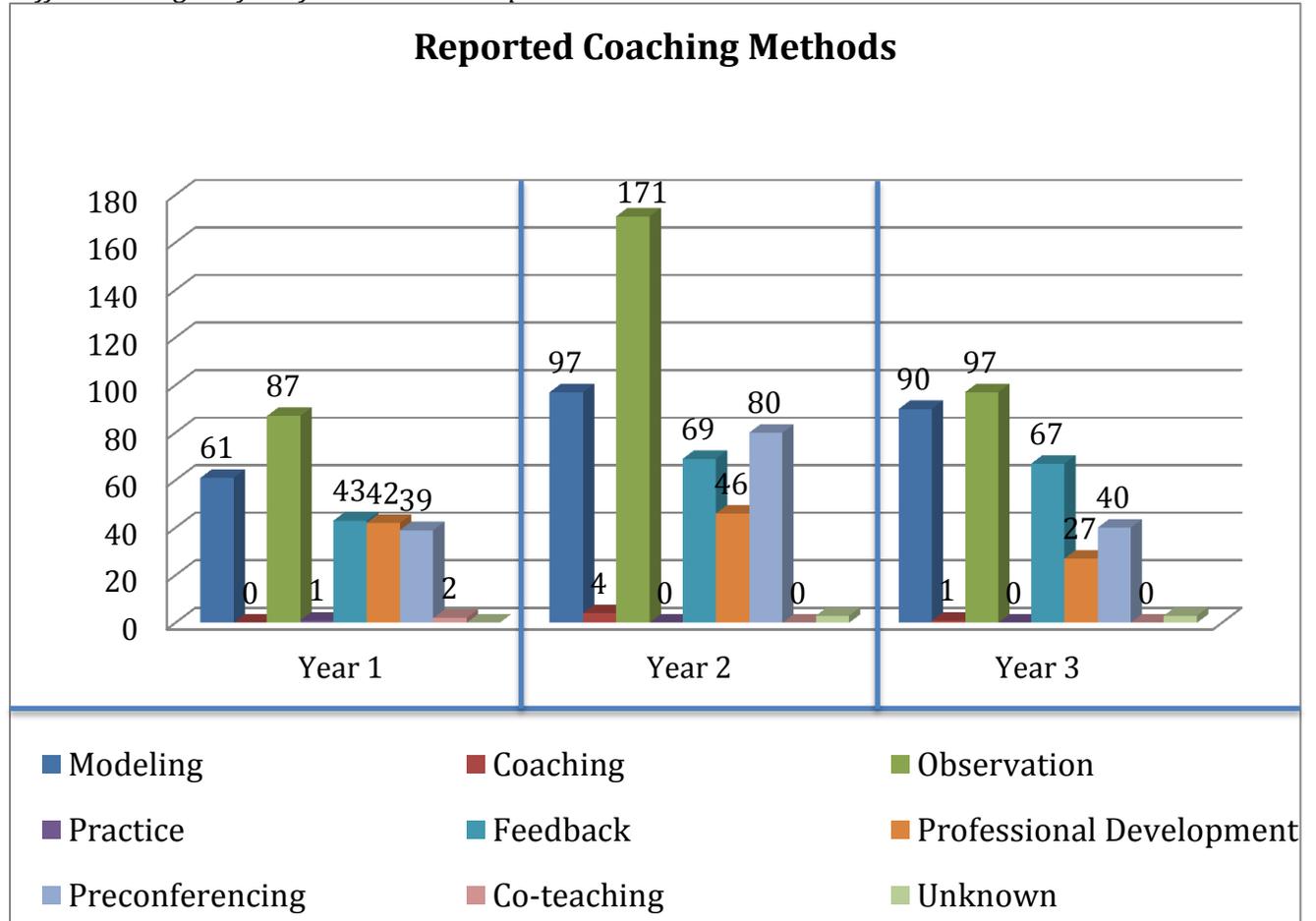
**Coaches Reported Coaching Practices:**

Descriptive analysis of coaches’ self-reported practices revealed that coaches used a variety of coaching strategies when interacting with teachers. Because of the self-reported nature of the data, some consolidation of key terms was needed to ensure clarity of results. For example, coaches often used the terms “feedback” and “post-conferencing” interchangeably. We opted for the term feedback to capture the broader construct of giving feedback to teachers about their practices as some feedback could have been given in a post-conference session with other opportunities for feedback happening “in the moment” or in classrooms in ways that may not structurally favor a post-feedback session. Literacy coaches became more consistent in the terminology they used across the course of the study making it easier to confidently capture the nature of the coaching session. Despite such consistency, not all coaches reported using all of the terms listed in Figure 2. For example, a few literacy coaches used the rather generic term of “coaching” to sometimes refer to their work with teachers, making it difficult to code the precise nature of such interactions. These considerations should be kept in mind when interpreting data in Figure 2.

An examination of reported coaching methods revealed considerable diversity in coaching approach, with some variation across years of PD that the teacher received. Because coaches could indicate more than 1 coaching method for each coaching session, and often indicated two when reporting their coaching behaviors (but vary rarely three), these behaviors should not be seen in isolation. In other words, categories, as used by coaches, were not mutually exclusive and at times may have overlapped, as is certainly the case when a literacy coach reported the broad term “coaching” when working with year 2 and year 3 teachers without explicitly defining what that meant. Despite such overlap, it is important to note that the majority of coaches did use terms in ways that made it relatively easy to determine the strategies they used during a coaching session.

Literacy coaches most commonly reported coaching practices that involved observing teachers. Observation was reported as the most frequent coaching behavior across all three years of professional development. Modeling was also a prominent theme and can be seen being offered to first and three year PD teachers at a greater proportional frequency (when compared to other practices) than teachers in year 2 of the intervention. Other common strategies reported across years of PD were providing teachers feedback, professional development and pre-conferencing. When reporting multiple coaching behaviors during a session, coaches were likely to report observation and feedback together more frequently than other strategies. Despite literacy coaches report of engaging more frequently in some coaching behaviors than others, they rarely reported co-teaching with teachers or having teachers practice. It may be that these behaviors were subsumed by coaches reports of observing and modeling, but it is notable that within the “I do, We do, You do” framework of coaching, very few coaches reported sharing instructional responsibilities with teachers that are inherent in a co-teaching setting. Although this finding may reflect a problem with the data, it may also reflect the fact that coaches were less comfortable/confident co-teaching with teachers or that they did not receive explicit support from Rollins facilitators in coaching “with” or “next to” teachers. Finally, diversity exists when one looks across years of professional development and coach behavior. Coaches reported observing teachers in year 2 more than they did teachers in year 1 and year 3 of PD. See Figure 2 for a breakdown of literacy coaches self-reported coaching practices.

Figure 2. *Coaches Reported Coaching Practices During Coaching Sessions with Teachers at Different Stages of Professional Development.*



### **Associations between Coaching Practices and Teacher Change**

A series of analyses were carried out to examine how literacy coaches' practices related to gains in teachers' instructional practices. To examine these associations, we first computed gain scores for the quality of teachers' instructional practices and their adherence to Read Right strategies. Gain scores were calculated by taking teachers' initial scores on CLASS, ELLCO and fidelity measures and subtracting them from their final scores (in Spring 2014) on the same measures. In order to examine the relation between coaches supports for teachers and teachers instructional practices, we computed a series of correlation coefficients. These correlation coefficients allowed us to examine whether an association existed between what coaches were doing in classrooms and change in teachers' instruction.

Results of these analyses reveals differential associations for the impact of literacy coaches' practices on teachers adherence to Read Right strategies. For teachers in their first year of Read Right training, the total number of minutes that coaches spent in classrooms was

associated with teacher improvement in conducting high quality repeated reading interactions (e.g., adherence to START strategies). In other words, the more dosage a teacher received (as measured by minutes a coach spent in a classroom in year 1 of the teachers involvement in Read Right), the more likely the teacher was to demonstrate faithful adherence to START strategies ( $r = .45, p < .05$ ).

For teachers in year 2 of their Read Right training, associations between the total number of minutes that a coach spent with a teacher and teachers' implementation of Read Right strategies was significant for adherence to PAC time strategies only ( $r = .52, p < .05$ ). Such a finding makes sense as in year two of Read Right, teachers typically receive professional development and coaching focused on increasing their use of strategies aimed at encouraging children's phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and concepts of print (PAC) knowledge. Although the lack of association between minutes a coach spent in the classroom and teachers' implementation of meaningful conversation (TALK) strategies in either years 1 or 2 of the Read Right intervention, may appear disappointing, it should be noted that teachers made gradual change in their TALK strategies each year of the project (see other Read Right reports) which may have made it more difficult, particularly with the way fidelity is scored) to detect consistent change in teachers' adherence. Finally, it should be noted that we were unable to examine associations between amount of time coaches spent in classrooms and teachers implementation of REAL Time (informational text) reads. Because very few teachers were observed in years 2 and 3 of the project implementing REAL Time instruction ( $N = 3$ ) it was not appropriate to examine associations between teachers' practice and amount of time that coaches spent with teachers.

A second set of analyses was undertaken to examine associations between the time coaches spent with teachers and teachers' growth on the quality of their language and literacy instruction. Associations between total time a coach spent in a classroom and quality of classroom language environment and book reading (as measured by the ELLCO) revealed no significant associations. Examinations of associations between coach time and teachers' practices on the CLASS, however, revealed different findings. Results demonstrate that across all years of PD, teachers who received more coaching (e.g. greater dosage) increased the quality of their feedback to children as measured by the CLASS ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ). In other words, the more time that coaches spent with teachers, regardless of year of PD, the more likely teachers were demonstrating language interactions with children that (a) scaffolded children's language responses, (b) were sustained in nature (demonstrating longer conversations), (c) provided additional information to children's utterances and (d) provided encouragement and affirmation for what children were saying and doing. A similar, although marginal, finding was found for dosage (i.e., amount of time coaches spent in classrooms) and the quality of teachers' language modeling ( $r = .31, p < .10$ ). Teachers who received more minutes with their coach were more likely to use (a) open ended questions, (b) participate in frequent conversations and (c) use advanced vocabulary (such as tier 2 words). Although this effect is only marginal, given the relatively small dataset, we interpret it with caution but note that it is consistent with other coach dosage findings.

Despite being relatively crude in measurement (as calculated by total minutes spent in classroom), dosage analyses reveal that the more time that coaches spent in classrooms the more relative impact they had on (1) teachers' adherence to Read Right START and PAC

strategies and (2) the quality of language interactions that teachers were having with children. These findings are important as they demonstrate the relative importance of a coach's "touch" on teachers and suggests that, all things being equal, teachers whose coaches spent more time in their classrooms providing them with modeling, feedback, and support significantly improved their adherence to Read Right strategies (i.e., START & PAC) and the quality of language interactions as measured the CLASS tool. Because research documents that CLASS scores are relatively stable across the school year (Hamre & Pianta, 2005), changes in teachers' instructional practices on the CLASS demonstrate the efficacy and importance of coaching to improvement in instructional quality.

Finally, it is important to note that literacy coaches' educational background and years of experience coaching was not related to improvements in teachers' instructional practices. Although one might posit that coaching experience prior to this project may impact teachers' practices as it reduces the coaches' 'learning curve' in how best to support teachers and work in a supervisory role, the majority of literacy coaches in this study had relatively similar backgrounds (i.e., they were new to coaching). This restricted range of previous coaching experience may contribute to a lack of significant associations between coach experience and teachers' instructional practices.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

Interviews were conducted with 7 YMCA Literacy Coaches and 4 Rollins Facilitators during the 2013-2014 school year. These interviews were conducted to examine ways in which both facilitators and coaches spoke about their roles and to identify promising practices, shared challenges and successes, and unique experiences inherent in improving teachers' implementation of Read Right strategies. Interviews were conducted at the facilitator or literacy coaches' office at a time arranged with each interviewee. Interviews were conducted by either Dr. Bingham or one of 4 doctoral students at Georgia State University who assisted with collecting the interview data. A semi-structured interview script was used during the interview process to ensure that conversations with coaches and facilitators covered similar topics and content. Although this script allowed for collecting common information across participants, interviewers were instructed to use follow up questions to probe for individual experiences or insights. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and entered into Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative analysis software program (CAQDAS). Any teacher names that appear in literacy coaches' quotes are pseudonyms and are used to protect the confidentiality of participants.

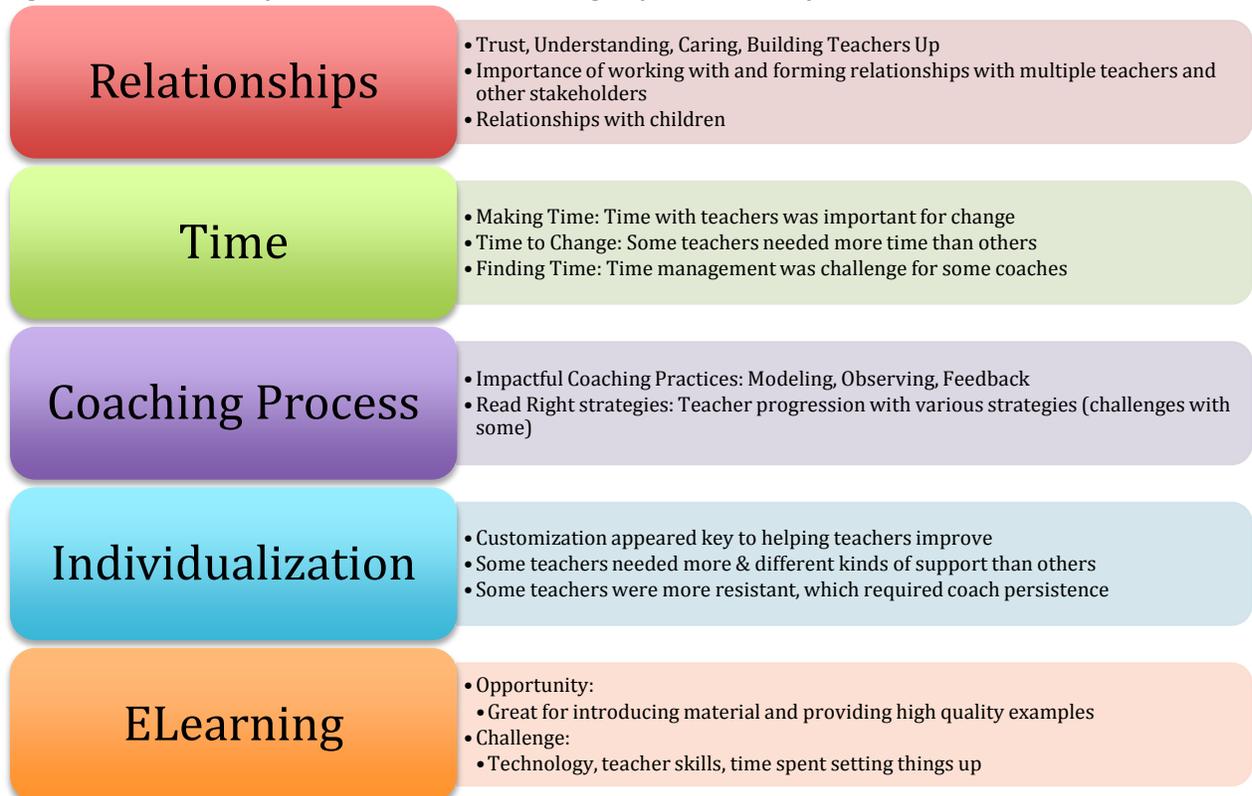
Data were analyzed using qualitative, sociolinguistic methods which allowed us to examine ways in which coaches and facilitators spoke about their experiences. Analysis of the data, based on Charmaz's (2006) description of constructivist grounded theory, proceeded in two phases. The first phase included the individuals who had conducted the interviews with the literacy coaches reading the interviews and coming together to discuss initial impressions of ways in which coaches spoke about their roles and experiences. During this first phase, researchers open coded the transcripts, making meaning of ways in which coaches spoke about supporting teachers, their experiences with Read Right, their impressions of what contributed to teachers' practices. This initial coding was undertaken by going line by line analyzing and coding instances where the coaches discussed

implementation of Read Right in their programs, and teachers' uptake (or experience) with the program at scale. During this first analytic phase, we paid particular attention to ways that literacy coaches spoke about their role as a coach and noted that they used multiple strategies and methods as they interacted with teachers. The first phase of coding yielded a total of 14 themes. These themes were then used to go back to the data and applied throughout focused or selective coding. In this second phase of coding we sorted the excerpts by codes that were applied during initial coding and continued with constant comparison. A total of 579 excerpts were coded with a total number of codes applied to excerpts being 1,135. Although the second coding process yielded a considerably large data set of codes, it also allowed us to condense the initial core categories/themes into the 5 primary findings for literacy coaches and 3 primary findings for facilitators. See Appendix A for prevalence coding of the 14 subcodes across coaches that were then used to generate the 5 primary findings for literacy coaches.

**Qualitative Findings: Literacy Coaches**

Figure 3 displays the core themes or primary findings that emerged from the literacy coaches interviews. This figure presents a quick view at the essence of what literacy coaches spoke about during their interviews and also offers insight into the essential words or phrases that literacy coaches used to explain their work. Each core theme or finding is explained in detail below, along with any subthemes that help capture the complexity of the finding. It is important to note that although each theme represents a distinct construct they do, sometimes, overlap.

Figure 3. *Overview of Five Themes that Emerged from Literacy Coach Interviews.*



### ***The Importance of Relationships***

A prominent theme throughout interviews related to the facilitative role that relationships played in the ways that coaches conducted their work. Relationships were spoken of in many ways, including an important first step or foundation to the coaching experience. They were also used in relation to other words, such as “teacher buy-in” or in “motivating” teachers. This sentiment is represented by the following quotes by different coaches:

- “(Um) In terms of coaching I think one of the (best) first things that you have to do, and that I like to do, is build a relationship with the teachers. Once you build that relationship it’s much easier to coach with them.”
- “Well first of all I will build that relationship. Usually I try to build a relationship with them before I go in, go ‘You have to do eLearning’ you know, so I built a relationship with them to where (if I) usually if I ask them to do something they do it.”
- “I love the one on one. Especially, and its easier because that rapport is being built at the same time, I’m not coming off in a harsh way, so it’s easier to just sit and talk to somebody like we are now. It is easier to be critiqued.

In their description of the importance of relationships to their coaching work, coaches used many words that reflected the importance of relationships to the way in which they coached or provided feedback to teachers. Key terminology that was coded as relationship based included the words: trust, caring, and rapport. These words reflected to the coaches that the coaching process was predicated on a shared mutual relationship between two people and that this relationship was essential to success of coaching. As one important role of coaches is to give teachers feedback, the literacy coaches spoke about the importance of this relationship in mediating the uncomfortable nature of helping individuals improve.

- “They need to trust me so that you won’t make them feel bad about what (you know) what you saw. It’s just that I, (um), want to make sure that I say the right thing but still let the teacher know that it needs to be improved. So, I won’t say that I struggle with it, its just that I want to make sure that I keep that relationship and I never want a teacher to feel bad”

Finally, teachers spoke about their relationship with individual children in the classroom as a core component of their literacy coaching experience. Children were seen by many coaches as important stakeholders in their coaching work and served as a reason to continue to go into classrooms and interact with teachers. In addition, children were used by literacy coaches as ways of helping teachers see the importance of the work. In this way, coaches leveraged the teachers’ relationships with children to encourage her to implement the approach. This sentiment was expressed by one coach with the following quote.

- “So you are so important to this child. And that we’re doing it for the children. You’re here for the kids. We know that you’re not here for the money.”

### ***The Importance of Time***

Coaches spoke in three distinct ways about the importance of time to their coaching work. First, literacy coaches spoke about the importance of making time to work with teachers and how this was important to helping teachers change their practices. Some of this theme centered around the fact that coaches had to adjust their expectations for how they were going to manage their own time in working with teachers. This sentiment is reflected by one coach in the following quote:

- “I thought (like) okay... by this—by week 3 they’re gonna be on Start and they’re gonna be- master that on week 4 they’re gonna do this and on week 5 they’re gonna do this and on week six.... It doesn’t work that way. People have their paces at which they learn and peop- and (you know), teachers have their paces in which they wanna do it.”

Second, literacy coaches spoke to how it is important to make time for teacher change and to be persistent (and understanding) in assisting teachers to adopt Read Right strategies. Many of the coaches noted that some strategies were easier to learn than others (START vs. TALK) and that many teachers needed considerable practice in order to implement the strategies as envisioned by the Rollins Center.

- I guess things just take time. It takes time to progress. (Like) you always want something instant, right now. (you know) “Why aren’t you getting the strategy?” But things just take time as far as learning X. And (you know) you kinda get off like you might have a (uh) set scope and sequence for the year, but it’s just going to be crazy. And I’m like a schedule person, I like to follow a scheduled schedule. But it’s just definitely not the case. (laughing)

Finally, teachers emphasized that finding time (or time management) often presented a core challenge to their work with teachers. Teachers were often busy and had difficulty finding enough time to receive PD or participate in online learning, plan lessons, and practice Read Right strategies while working as teachers in the classroom. Coaches often assisted teachers in juggling multiple responsibilities and demands while assisting them to implement Read Right strategies. At times, this was a difficult balance as articulated in the following quote.

- “They work all day long from 8 to 6:30 or whatever her hours are. She doesn’t really have that much of a break; just to go get lunch and come back so it’s hard [to figure out] (to wh-) and when she does have her planning time, she’s gotta get her lesson plans done. She doesn’t have an assistant, she got a sub in her room. So- It’s all these factors into one and I’ve been in the classroom, I completely understand where I do not want to overwhelm her even more with ‘You have to have this done by this day’ ....you know. So that’s a lot of the process too.”

### ***Coaching Process***

Literacy coaches were asked to articulate the ways in which they worked with teachers to help them implement Read Right strategies. Much of this discourse centered around what literacy coaches actually did in classrooms. When literacy coaches were general in their

description of what they did as a literacy coach, they were prompted to give an explicit example or articulate ways in which they coached. When speaking about their roles and responsibilities, literacy coaches often mentioned the overarching framework of Read Right by citing “I do, We do, You do” coaching model. Although the framework appeared to make sense to the coaches, they had a more difficult time articulating their specific coaching behaviors that connected with the approach. For example, when prompted to explain her model for working with teachers, one literacy coach responded:

- “...you literally go into the classroom. You sit at the tables with them at the different times (and you) when you hear a child say something that you think you can build a conversation on, you start and you model and you show and you- Cause you’re sitting with the teacher and it just shows. And then afterwards, after that conversation, say ‘You see what we did?’”

In another quote illustrating some of the challenge that literacy coaches had in being explicit about the coaching model, another literacy coach discusses how she gives feedback to teachers and how it fits in the model.

- “And when I observe I always give feedback. So, the ‘I do, We do, You do’ model is what I follow.”

Although coaches had some difficulty in articulating a general model, beyond citing the “I do, We do, and You do” framework, they frequently landed on specific coaching behaviors or strategies within the model that they found impactful to their work as coaches. Certain coaching practices appeared to resonate more with coaches than others and they were able to give precise examples when queried about what they did when using a particular coaching practice.

Modeling was a practice that came up and was frequently referred to by all literacy coaches. Although coaches also spoke about the importance of observing and giving feedback, many cited modeling as one of the most impactful approaches as “it demonstrates to teachers what they should do”. Typical quotes around modeling included using it as a way clarifying and demonstrating best practice to teachers who were attempting to initiate a new strategy for the first time or having difficulty with the strategy.

- I feel comfortable modeling and watching the teachers do things and they look at me (like) and (I’m like-) I can start doing some. And I know if they are at a free standstill with TALK or anything like that, I can come in and model.
- If it’s something that I feel like I can pull ‘em in and we talk about it and I model it for them and it’s me modeling for them and then they model it back, that’s a practice. Or if I call them and we talk about, ‘Tell me about this that happened today.’ And they tell me they’re like ‘I already know that I messed up here.’ or ‘I didn’t do this right.’ And they’ve already fixed it, then we just talk about- It just depends on what they need.

At times, coaches connected the importance of modeling to giving teachers feedback and encouraging them to try the strategies on their own. Feedback was emphasized as an important coaching strategy by all the literacy coaches, although coaches varied in how much, or to what degree, they emphasized giving feedback. For example, when articulating their approach to coaching, some literacy coaches were more detailed in the way that they spoke about specific practices. Where some coaches mentioned coaching methods/strategies in isolation, other were more integrated in their description. In the following excerpt, the coach articulates a wide range of behaviors that she uses with teachers and then summarizes by citing the model.

- “I just think that mainly the support and feedback, because feedback is very important when knowing (like) “What are my next steps, when do I move forward?” So I just think (you know) teacher and coach feedback, (you know) the continuous (uh) feedback is very important in the whole supporting the teachers.”
- “Just continue to model, continue to—cause we did that maybe last year, probably bring that back out (you know), show it to them again. And then once they practice it we just start with what we saw and then we go, “We want two things for the next read.”
- “And then I give feedback to them as well. So yes, I do (um), the- I model, I observe, then I do a debriefing, and give the feedback. I think, as a part of the model is (um), I do/we do/you do.”

Although the final quote in this set highlights a majority of the categories listed in the quantitative data, it also demonstrates that coaches often were not particularly descriptive about their coaching practices unless explicitly prompted by the interviewer. Even after prompting, some coaches struggled to be explicit in describing their practices or in articulating the ways in which they moved a teacher from the “I do” portion of the coaching process to the “you do” portion. This finding appears to align with the quantitative data and suggest that some coaches did not appear to have a well-articulated coaching model for working with teachers.

### ***Individualization***

When prompted to discuss the ways in which they coached or worked with teachers, literacy coaches often responded by discussing how their approach often varied as a function of whom they were working with (which teachers) and where they were in implementing Read Right strategies. Much of the coaches’ discourse about their coaching work depended on their perceptions of individual needs within each classroom and may be one reason why coaches had some difficulty articulating a general intervention approach, because they individualized enough that they approached different teachers in different ways. In other words, it appears that their awareness of differing teacher needs prompted coaches to individualize their coaching practices in ways that provided more targeted support to teachers’ rather general strategies across teachers. The general nature of this theme is captured in the following quotes :

- “You have (um) different levels. Everybody’s not at the same level, because they’re grown does not mean that they’re at the same level. So just like you had to individualize (you know) for my children, I had to do the same thing for the teachers. And I think that coming in like I said, from teaching, I’m thinking (like), “Oh, these are just bigger kids”. So, (I mean) they’re adults.”
- “I go off of what they need. So if they need more assistance with REAL Time then that’s what I want to give them. I want to give them more support (like) “Okay, why don’t you watch me do it this time?” And then the next time, I come in, and I can observe you, and then we can meet, debrief and then that way I can show- (you know) we can go over it, anything that was, (you know), I hate to say wrong but, wrong.”

Individualizing coaching practices helped literacy specialists meet the teachers where they were at and use their coaching to encourage teachers who may have been more reticent to originally participate in the project. The theme of individualization is represented in the following quote that acknowledges different approaches are needed with different “types” of teachers.

- “They sometimes take longer to participate. And it’s like (you know), it’s that, it’s that back and forth. It’s getting... (You know) I have to add salt to you, I have to add sugar to you and vinegar to this person and pepper to this one. You have to know that. So, me going in two years ago, I’m just gonna give everybody salt. And then everybody should work ‘cause that’s what works for me. It doesn’t work like that.”

Finally, within the theme of individualization, coaches spoke to the power of working one-on-one with teachers and how this allowed them to have a deeper connection with teachers and greater impact on teachers’ practices.

- “But I- I love the one on one. Especially, and it’s easier because that rapport is being built at the same time, I’m not coming off in a harsh way, so it’s easier to just sit and talk to somebody like we are now. And, it just depends (like) for some teachers it just depends on their strengths and weaknesses. If I see that some people (like) have it, I might go in and just—that’s why I said do the modeling again for them, because maybe all they need is just to see a certain thing and then they’ll get it. And some people, I go in and we plan together, we pre-plan. (Like) for instance, I have an older teacher, Ms. Beck. (Um) I went in and she had to do a Real Time, she’s a year 2. And she’s not computer-savvy at all so the trainings (you know) I have to sit there with her on ELearning and actually sit right beside her and we do it together.”

### ***ELearning: Opportunity and Challenge***

Coaches reflected on both the benefits and challenges of ELearning to their coaching practices. Because ELearning was not being implemented uniformly across sites, coaches spoke from multiple perspectives. For example, because some sites, such as the Academies were using ELearning for all their PD, their experiences with, and perceptions of, ELearning were somewhat different than sites who received traditional stand and deliver PD, but used ELearning for new teachers only. One theme that emerged from the data was the sense that ELearning presented a great opportunity for introducing Read Right content and for helping teachers understand what was expected of them. Literacy coaches who held this view spoke of how ELearning provided a strong model for what practices should look like. For one coach ELearning assisted her in customizing her approach to working with teachers.

- “Actually, now that we went towards the ELearning, it’s more individualized, so when I meet with them, it’s kinda like—okay, where do we need to be? And then now we use the progress monitoring forms, which are really helpful. Because then I can see (like) if they’re at a two, then I know how to get them to the next step. How do I get them to a three? So I think that has been very helpful this year with the Elearning and progress monitoring and kind of defining (you know) each step of where they need to be.”

Although literacy coaches spoke of some strengths of ELearning, they also addressed challenges. These challenges ranged from teachers not having access to internet at home or having limited computer knowledge to concerns about the teachers taking enough away from ELearning to be effective in the classroom. For example, one literacy coach explained.

- “So if they do eLearning, I’m waiting on them to do the eLearning and then they get done with the eLearning, and then I go observe and I’m like, ‘Let me model’ and then after I model I’m gonna sit with you and show you everything.’ And it’s like I’m teaching it to them anyways. And then I feel like I have to sit down and re-coach the whole strategy sometimes because they didn’t take away what they needed.”
- “That may sound weird. But I really do feel like face to face is quicker. Because I can sit down with them and talk about everything and go through everything which I will after they do the ELearning cause a lot of the times I have to see what they have taken away from it. Like, Ms. May, she’s on ELearning and then we get to modeling and it’s flat because I feel like she didn’t get what she needed from eLearning.”

The opportunities and challenges that literacy coaches experienced with ELearning appeared to be relatively uneven across sites as a function of being hybrid ELearning sites (i.e., first year PD teachers only receiving ELearning) and full ELearning sites. Sites that were fully online for PD reported fewer challenges than sites who were using ELearning as a way to train new teachers. Literacy coaches who were using ELearning as a supplement

only reported fewer strengths and more challenge and pessimism around the opportunities afforded by delivering content through the online portal.

### **Qualitative Findings: Rollins Facilitators**

The four interviews conducted with Facilitators at the Rollins Center were approached in a similar fashion to the interviews conducted with the YMCA Literacy Coaches. We approached the data in much the same way with multiple passes yielding subcodes (N = 10) that were then combined and reduced to three core codes or themes. These themes are presented in Figure 4 and share some overlap with the findings from the coaches.

Figure 4. *Overview of Three Themes that Emerged from Rollins' Facilitator Interviews.*



### ***Accountability***

Accountability was a theme which surfaced through much of the talk with facilitators. This theme encompassed the importance and centralness of accountability to project success, challenges of implementing the approach because of a lack of accountability or follow through by leadership, and the importance of the literacy coaches being accountable for their time in classrooms. The accountability theme should not be perceived as negative, and facilitators would often note that they understood many of the challenges that centers experienced in juggling Read Right work with other tasks. Despite such positive spin, it was clear that accountability was a challenge with implementing a professional development approach across organizations where one organization has little say or control over what the coaches are “officially” doing. This sentiment is expressed in the following quote, where a facilitator explains the difficulty with setting up trainings and implementing them.

- I don't think clear expectations for this work were set from the very beginning of what the facilitator's role was, of what the coach's role was, what the partnership was, I just think that we- I, I spent a lot of time trying to get trainings on the schedule and they were cancelled. I can't even tell you how many times I planned that training and it didn't happen until later. So, for me there was a lot of (like), fuzziness around the expectations that were supposed to be in place, (um), which I think caused a lot of stress and basically pushed us to kind of (like), do what we could (you know), do our best to get in the classrooms.

Consistent with this theme, there was discussion across facilitators about the importance of also holding literacy coaches and teachers accountable for implementing the work as envisioned. At times, the facilitators expressed frustration with not being able to leverage more expectations on both of these stakeholders (coaches/teachers) for getting the work done or implementing Read Right in a fashion that was consistent with the Read Right model of coaching. The frustration with not being able to precisely direct the work and struggling with some of the coaches following through on plans that were made jointly between facilitators and coaches was evident in a number of quotes. In addition, emphasis was drawn in the accountability theme to the important role that leadership buy-in and participation is to the process of coach and teacher performance. These two points are represented in the following quotes.

- “And I'll say, “How did- You know- something go yesterday?- “Oh we didn't do that yesterday, I just thought-“ You know and I'm like “ahhh” you know, why didn't you do yesterday? But I really can't say that. So their lack of follow through—or—I think they feel that with teachers. Teachers will be like, well they feel like they're not, no one's really telling them they have to do this.”

“You go in and the teachers are saying ‘I'm doing small groups,’ and you're like, ‘Well you should be in centers right now.’ (you know) It's a scheduling thing too, but, again, that's not there necessarily- they're not able to hold the teachers accountable to that. They could go to leadership and say ‘Look, aren't they supposed to be follow this schedule? Because they're not, they're doing small groups instead of centers.’ Or, (you know), whatever it may be. But, they're- it's just uncomfortable- so we talked a lot about planning an activity (you know) connected to a book where you go in and you're specifically focused on TALK. But sometimes it just doesn't happen. *If we had leadership going in and saying you need to do this, then that would be a different situation.*” (Italics added)

It was apparent through interviewing the facilitators that they had to become more playful, adaptive, and persistent in the ways that they worked with literacy coaches to encourage them to follow through and be consistent in working with teachers in classrooms. Their

experiences with persisting with teachers were evident in how they spoke about teacher buy-in and receptivity to the approach. For some teachers, the consistency of seeing the facilitator and having the coach in the classroom week after week and year after year appeared to send the message home that Read Right was of value and something that was not going away anytime soon. This appeared to be important to teachers' adoption of Read Right strategies as teachers are often exposed to new policies and programs that often do not stay or "have legs" after an initial push at the beginning of the new project. Working with leadership was helpful but also frustrating for many facilitators, but key to helping teachers see the importance of the approach. As articulated by one coach.

- "We needed to create a mindshift of prioritizing this [Read Right] experience. Which is weird to me as an outsider, kind of an outsider, because I think if you're going to, as an organization, make literacy coaches at your centers and you're going to hire people to be in this role, and then to defuse that, or not to stick with that seems strange."
- "So I think that there's some kind of- needs to be coming from their director. And it doesn't have to be punitive, it could be really positive! It could be the director coming in, 'Oh, I wonder what book you're reading this week. How are you extending it? What?' You know, it could be so positive. But I think that's missing so I think that's hard for the coaches."

Throughout the accountability theme, it was clear that facilitators valued the importance of leadership in ensuring that the project was successful and that leadership being less involved clearly sent a message to teachers and facilitators about the relative importance of the project. In addition, although they acknowledged that it often takes time to build relationships and implement new approaches, they expressed concern with the dosage of coaching being offered teachers (i.e., how often coaches were in classrooms) as well as the amount of follow-through on specific strategies. Concern over the dosage of coaching support being offered to teachers was expressed by more than one facilitator and is consistent with quantitative findings about variability in time spent with teachers across coaches. As articulated by one facilitator, in the context of accountability and seeing the work through: "There is a lot of wasted time. Like a lot of down time in those centers." After seeing one of her coach's dosage data, a different facilitator articulated a similar concern by stating:

- "I addressed time being spent in classrooms with one of my coaches. I went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth before I said anything and thought a lot about how I was going to approach that conversation, because I am technically not her manager. I am not her boss. And I approached it as a- looking at the dosage, knowing some of the things you've expressed as challenges, (like), here's some things I think we can change."

Although facilitators expressed concern with the amount of time that coaches were spending with teachers, this theme was not articulated by literacy coaches. However, because this theme is evident in the quantitative data, with the amount of dosage being correlated with teacher instructional change, it is essential to find ways that get literacy coaches into classrooms more frequently and with a more detailed coaching model.

### ***Individualization***

Although accountability was an important, multifaceted theme that emerged from the data, another theme, related to accountability, was the importance of individualizing facilitator support to help coaches improve. The individualization theme is similar in nature to the ways in which the literacy coaches spoke of working with teachers, but facilitators were much more articulate and deliberate in explaining their coaching model and how they support coaches in implementing strategies. Facilitators noted the strengths and challenges they had working with their assigned literacy coaches and centers and the ways in which they provided customized support. This customized support appeared embedded in most facets of a facilitator's role and the coaching model as facilitators used self-reflection and feedback to try to get literacy coaches to possess the knowledge and skill necessary to independently implement Read Right coaching. This point is expressed in the following quote:

- “The main thing was making sure we focus like (c-) continuous and consistent use of that coaching cycle. But having an embedded piece, like a self-reflecting piece so that the coaches could kinda come to their own conclusions about what needs to happen. So I would kinda just ask questions like that and (um)—I would try to make sure that my work during my actual site visits. I would leave and say ‘Okay the next—the next time I come I want to have a discussion about the third START Read so if you could go online and watch it, and we could talk about it from there.’ And if they didn’t, then we would just watch it together because I wanted them to always just too kind of be always learning more. So, just to continue to enhance the skills that they had already developed in a personal fashion.”
- “Our reflection meetings I think were pretty important. I think a lot of times the coaches were just going from observation to observation and not truly (um), being strategic or purposeful with how they planned for teachers or what they observed (you know), I think it was just get into the classroom as much as you can and see what you can and give them the feedback and move forward (you know), versus well, hold-up, what- what did this teacher do last time, where do I want to see them go this time? And then, let’s reflect on that and see what we can do for next time. So I think kind of that coaching cycle, we were able to really reflect individually with coaches about using the progress monitoring tools. I think it just kind of made coaches step back and reflect on what was actually happening.”

Similar to the literacy coaches, facilitators spoke of their needs to adjust the pace of their work based up on individual coaches and their experiences with learning the content of the project. These discussions often drew attention to differences or similarities in the coaches’

personality or style and the facilitator's approach. Although facilitators acknowledged some differentiation was needed when working with a coach who might need additional support, they also expressed urgency around the work and addressed the importance of getting the coach to a point where she was working independently.

- “I think my style was very fast-paced and wanting the teachers to get as much as they can and grow as much as they can. My goal was to transfer knowledge and skill to the coaches quickly as possible so that they could really be the driver. Which I know will take time and *differentiate* based on each coach, but in my mind it was (um), how do I say it? I didn't want to be a micromanager, I wanted them to have the skills to do the job because that-, in my mind, that was my job.”

Finally, facilitators acknowledged that literacy coaches differed in their learning styles, personalities, and approaches to the work. This sentiment was expressed by all facilitators when they spoke about the ways in which they worked with coaches. Although they used a common approach, they often customized it for the coach with whom they were working.

- “The coaches I support have distinct personalities. So, I wanted to be very intentional, I always have that awareness in the back of my mind. Like there is no generalized approach. I have to consider their personalities, their work ethic, their style—their learning styles. Coming up with a plan, an individualized plan, to be responsive to them, as adults. So it worked well as long as I kept that in mind.”

In a separate quote, one facilitator reflects on how she was working with two different literacy coaches, one who was relatively new to the project and one with more experience and how this influenced the level of support that she provided.

- “What I try to do with the first coach this year is I tried to get her to do more of the work on her own, or we would do joint things. I really tried for her to be very reflective. ‘Where are they [the teachers] now, what’s missing and what do we need to do to provide them that?’ And this year, she did. She took a much more active role. And she planned a couple things. Like she actually wrote a lot of the guides this year. She really stepped it up. With the second coach, like I said, we’re just trying to learn strategies right now. I mean she did plan some things, but because she was brand new and didn't know the strategies, I had a lot of those conversations with teachers. So if we observed a START read, we would go back, she would fill out a form, and I would fill it out- and we'd go over. And oftentimes at first, she would say, “Would you lead the feedback session?” Because she just didn't know how to do it (you know). And, or if it was just a really, really bad read she's like, “I don't even know how to start that conversation.” So I did a lot of modeling for her this year.”

This last example exemplifies in many ways the manner in which facilitators approached working with coaches. Each could speak, and did, about the relative strengths and challenges of individual coaches and where they were focusing their energy to ensure that the coach was implementing Read Right with her teachers. Each facilitator's knowledge of

the literacy coaches, and the teachers that she supported, demonstrated the relationships that they shared. In fact, although this theme is listed last, both the two previous themes connect considerably to importance of building and maintaining relationships with coaches and teachers in order to be effective in their facilitation roles.

### ***Relationships***

Similar to literacy coaches, facilitators spoke of the importance of relationships to their work. They emphasized the important role that relationships played in creating a strong foundation from which to coach teachers and how building rapport with the coaches (and teachers) was essential to carrying out the work. This sentiment is expressed in this prototypic quote.

- “I would say building relationships and being responsive to individual teachers and having empathy—(like) not feeling sorry for them, like ‘Oh I see why you can’t get this done. But I do understand and respect your experience, but then being more solution-oriented, like ‘While I understand that this is happening, let’s not waste a lot of time. (Like) it happened, I understand that. So, let’s go—like, what can we do to move forward?’ So, I think that just establishing relationships, being able to work with people from all walks of life is important.”

While facilitators noted the importance of relationships to a strong coaching foundation, they were more likely than coaches to speak to how one begins with these relationships and then uses them to leverage learning opportunities. Unlike literacy coaches who spoke about relationships in a more general sense, facilitators spoke about how relationships worked to accomplish two things (1) to motivate coaches and teachers alike and (2) as a resource when having uncomfortable or critical conversations. The essence of the importance of relationships to motivation was often reflected in the fact that coaches and facilitators needed teachers to buy in to the project so that they would be engaged. Facilitators saw the coaching relationships as key to helping motivate and engage teachers in implementing the strategies. This sentiment is reflected in the following statement.

- “We [facilitators] are just there to support, so I feel like the coach, in my mind, has to have a strong relationship with the teacher so that then she can motivate and show them how important these strategies are, versus say do this. And (you know), slowly with those teachers we are getting the relationship we need to have to be like ‘Look, we promise, just do this. It will make things run smoothly. You’ll see bigger growth out of your kids.’”

Although literacy coaches spoke to the importance of relationships, they were less articulate about how relationships helped in the coaching process or how they helped

teachers feel “safe” when receiving feedback that was not always positive. In addition, the facilitators spoke at a greater level about how the relationship was important to teachers trusting coaches. Finally, facilitators commented on the delicate balance in relationships to improving performance. Although facilitators saw relationships as key to the coaching experiences, they described how maintaining the relationship as professional in nature was important to coach and teacher improvement. These sentiments are captured in the next three quotes.

- “It was like once we (you know) built this relationship, they really trusted me—I felt like they really trusted me and I think we had a great working relationship. We were in a relationship where we could have some crucial conversations if we needed to.”
- “When they [coaches] go into centers and their teacher is over here, whatever, and (I mean) you have to have a strong relationship with the teacher to say ‘Can you put your phone down and go talk with me?’ Or, ‘can you stop cutting that out and come over here with me?’ (you know), Because you’re basically telling them ‘You’re doing something wrong’, which has never really been our way. When it’s not connected to a strategy, that’s very hard for our- our coaches to do.”
- “Sometimes when you develop a relationship with someone, then it’s hard to highlight uncomfortable conversations. So I wanted to make sure there was like a fine line where I didn’t let the relationship take over and we couldn’t have those conversations. So, there was one coach that I really just felt like was really distracted. And there were some things I knew and some things I didn’t know about. But we were just going to go about our implementation plan and I’d say, “Here, why don’t you try these things and let me know how this thing goes and we can develop the rest of the plan based on how your experiences”. And sometimes (um) there wasn’t a follow-through. So I would just (you know) as part of our visit, I would say, “Hey, can we protect some time, like ten or fifteen minutes, just so we can make sure that both of us are on the same page and we can, I can, do... like –I’d say a post-check on our relationship and so—I was just kinda telling them, “Here are some things that I’m noticing.”

### **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations flow from the data presented above. Because they are drawn from the data, recommendations represent opportunities to maximize existing services and strategies in ways that will be more impactful to teachers and their students. In the majority of cases, recommendations that are highlighted in this section represent key points highlighted by multiple participants (university researchers, Rollins facilitators, and YMCA literacy coaches) and, therefore, should not be seen in isolation. In other words, the

recommendations below are steeped in findings across participants and methodologies (quantitative and qualitative). As such, they represent key stakeholders perspectives and experiences that, if implemented, should impact the success of Read Right in (a) improving teachers' practices and (b) promoting the language and literacy learning of children.

- Coaches matter to teacher's instructional practices. The amount of coaching a teacher received related to her learning the strategies and improving the quality of her language and literacy interactions with children. It is essential that coaches spend considerable time in teachers' classrooms supporting them in this work. Teachers who received more dosage (i.e., coach time) were more likely to improve the quality of their practices. Literacy coaches must spend as much time as possible working with teachers in their classrooms. Although no clear coaching method emerged from the quantitative data as "more impactful" than another, facilitators and coaches emphasized the importance of modeling, observing and giving precise and quick feedback to teachers as promising practices. Action plans and clear follow through should also be added to this list.
- A clear model for how to go about coaching (theory of change) is needed with prototypic ways of approaching teachers and established coaching routines for following through on the work. Considerable variability in coaches' logs suggests that a well-developed and programmatic way for coaching did not exist at the beginning of this study. Although it appears that both facilitators and coaches tightened the coaching model used during the course of this project, additional follow through and plans for accountability and/or establishing milestones is needed to ensure that the work is accomplished according to plan.
- Establishing a programmatic coaching model should not be undertaken in a "one size fits all" manner that disregards the importance of customizing supports for individual teachers who need more or less time, and/or support, around certain Read Right strategies. Facilitators and coaches both spoke to the importance of individualization to making the project successful. However, individualization should be not be seen as a reason not to follow through with a teacher or to relax the intensive time that is needed in each classroom to ensure that teachers are maximizing Read Right instructional practices in ways that will impact children's language and literacy learning.
- Involving teachers, as much as possible, in their own learning process appears to increase buy-in and contributes to teacher change. Promising practices highlighted by facilitators and literacy coaches that should be "routinized" in Read Right practices include: (a) creating collaborative mentoring opportunities and/or communities of practice, (b) video-recording and self-reflective feedback sessions, and (c) having teachers observe coaches (or other teachers) model strategies while they take notes using clear progress monitoring tools. These coaching related practices could assist literacy coaches and facilitators in establishing expectations,

increasing buy-in and focusing explicitly on what behaviors are valued (and why) within the Read Right methods/strategies.

- Teachers need more, not less, support around TALK strategies. Although coaches reported supporting teachers across all three years of PD in TALK strategies, examinations of quantitative data reveal that they were doing so less frequently than START strategies. Considering that some coaches in their interviews reported that TALK was “hard, because you can’t script it”, it may be that coaches were spending less time with TALK because (1) they felt less sure about how to best coach the TALK strategy or (2) they saw it as “hard” for teachers and therefore spent more time providing support in areas where they thought the teacher was more likely to improve. Regardless of why coaches were spending less time on TALK strategies, it is important that Rollins examine the unproductive narrative (that may have been perpetuated by previous reports) that helping teachers have meaningful conversations is something that is difficult. Additional time and effort should be afforded to thinking about ways to capture, encourage, and celebrate ways in which teachers are increasing the quality of their conversations and how coaches can best support this work.
- True commitment and buy-in should be established and encouraged with institutional leadership having a clear, connected, and meaningful role in the work. Although leadership at any level have multiple roles and responsibilities, the most successful sites implementing Read Right had leaders who very vested in seeing the work help teachers improve and worked to support literacy coaches in their role without pulling them into other center responsibilities that took time away from implementing in class coaching.
- Related to this point, teachers are busy people who have multiple responsibilities in classrooms. It is essential that clear messaging is given by both leadership at each site and coaches about how Read Right compliments the centers commitment to high quality early care and learning in order to ensure that it isn’t seen as an “add on” or “something else to do.” To ensure seamless delivery, leadership at Rollins and individual sites should establish more precise ways to help teachers (and coaches) understand how Read Right maps onto existing systems (Georgia PreK, Head Start Framework, Teaching Strategies GOLD, etc.) in ways that creates synergy/alignment that will allow for optimal child developmental outcomes.
- Finally, establishing a clear and efficient accountability system for coaches that allows them to more precisely indicated how often and what they are doing with teachers will allow for a better understanding of what coaching practices are most impactful to teachers’ practices. Standardizing processes for collecting these data should be prioritized and automatized in ways that do not place burden on coaches (and/or facilitators), but that also more clearly delineate dosage and fidelity variables. Establishing this system will not only better assist with tracking coach

impact, but it should assist the coach in ways to improve her work and determine which coaching methods are having the most impact on which teachers. These data could then be used to provide greater clarity around the individualization of coaching.

## References

- Hamre, B. K., Justice, L. M., Pianta, R. C., Kilday, C., Sweeney, B., Downer, J. T., & Leach, A. (2010). Implementation fidelity of MyTeachingPartner literacy and language activities: Associations with preschoolers' language and literacy growth. *Early childhood Research Quarterly, 25*, 329-347.
- Jackson, R. et al., (2007). *National Evaluation of Early Reading First: Final Report*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 2007.
- Justice, L. M., Mashburn, A., Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2008). Quality of language and literacy instruction in preschool classrooms serving at-risk pupils. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*, 27-50.
- Kinzie, M. B., Whitaker, S. D., Neesen, K., Kelley, M., Matera, M. & Pianta, R. C. (2006). Innovative web-based professional development for teachers of at-risk preschool children. *Educational Technology & Society, 9*(4), 194-204.
- Landry, S. H., Anthony, J. L., Swank, P. R., & Monseque-Bailey, P. (2009). Effectiveness of comprehensive professional development for teachers of at-risk preschoolers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101*(2), 448-465.
- Lieber, J., Butera, G., Hanson, M., Palmer, S., Horn, E. Czaja, et al. (2009). Factors that influence the implementation of a new preschool curriculum: Implications for professional development. *Early Education and Development, 20*, 456-481.
- Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., Hamre, B. K., Justice, L. M., & Pianta, R. C. (2010). Consultation for teachers and children's language and literacy development during prekindergarten. *Applied Developmental Science, 14*, 179-196.
- Maxwell, K. L., Early, D. M., Bryant, D., Kraus, S., Hume, K., & Crawford, G. (2009). *Georgia study of early care and education: Findings from Georgia's Pre-K Program —Executive summary*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG ChildDevelopment Institute.
- McGee, L. M., & Schickedanz, J. A. (2007). Repeated interactive read-alouds in preschool and kindergarten. *The Reading Teacher, 60*, 742-751.
- National Early Literacy Panel (2009). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. Jessup, MD: National Center for Family Literacy, the National Institute for Literacy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Rockville, MD: National Institutes of Health.

Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Pianta, R. C., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., Hamre, B. K., Justice, L. (2008). Effects of web-mediated professional development resources on teacher-child interactions in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*, 431-451.

Powell, D. R., Diamond, K. E., Burchinal, M. R., & Koehler, M. J. (2010). Effects of an early literacy professional development intervention on head start teachers and children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(2), 299-312.

Powell, D. R., Steed, E. A., & Diamond, K. E. (2010). Dimensions of literacy coaching with Head Start teachers. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 30*, 148-161.

Smith, M., Brady, J. P., & Anastasopoulos, L. (2002). *Early Literacy and Language Classroom Observation Scale: Pre-K, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (ELLCO)*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Wasik, B. A., Bond, M. A., & Hindman, A. (2006). The effects of a language and literacy intervention on Head Start children and teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 63-74.

Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, A. H. (2011). Identifying critical components of an effective preschool language and literacy coaching intervention. In S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (3rd ed., pp. 322-336). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Whitaker, S. D., Kinzie, M. B., Kraft-Sayre, M. E., Mashburn, A., & Pianta, R. C. (2007). Use and evaluation of Web-based professional development services across participant levels of support. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(6), 1573-1707.

Appendix A

**Listing of Subcodes by Number of Excerpts and Literacy Coaches Commenting on each Subcode**

<b>Subcode</b>	<b># of excerpts</b>	<b># of Coaches reporting subcode</b>
Scheduling, Time management, improvement	78	7
Teacher Turnover: Challenge	10	3
Coaching Method: Feedback	49	7
Coaching Method: Modeling	55	7
Coaching Method: Observation	31	6
Teacher Skill in Implementing Strategies	51	7
Teacher Will/Buy-In	42	7
Customizing Approach/Individualization	52	7
Characteristics of a Successful Coach	38	7
Defining Coaching and Other Supports	37	6
Importance of Relationships	38	7
Lessons Learned About Being Effective Coach	29	5
Elearning Affordances/Benefits	28	7
Elearning Constraints/Challenges	41	7
<b>Total Number of Excerpts</b>	<b>579</b>	