PRELIMINARY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Head Start East 2027 Annual Conference

Monday–Thursday, April 12–15, 2027 · The Royal Sonesta San Juan, 5961 Isla Verde Avenue, Carolina, Puerto Rico 00979

Preliminary. This overview shows the conference structure, topics, learning objectives, and daily schedule. Session titles and presenters are selected through our call for presentations and will be announced after decisions in December 2026. Times may shift slightly.

Conference description

The Head Start East Annual Conference is a four-day professional development conference for early childhood professionals. It brings together teachers and assistant teachers, early childhood special education and early intervention staff, home visitors, coaches and mentors, family services and family engagement staff, health, nutrition, and safety coordinators, fiscal and operations staff, center directors and program leaders, and governing board and policy council members, from Head Start and Early Head Start, child care, pre-K, and community early learning programs.

The program combines general sessions with concurrent 90-minute breakout sessions led by early childhood practitioners and subject-matter experts. Attendees choose the sessions that best fit their role, so each person builds a schedule around their own professional goals. Sessions are presented in English, with some offered in Spanish.

Add-on trainings (separate registration)

In-depth trainings before and during the conference. Each one can be added to a conference registration or booked on its own.

- **Sunday, April 11:** Sunday Breathwork Workshop with Monica Rollins, 10:00 AM–3:00 PM; or Active Supervision with Melvin J. Gravely, 9:30 AM–3:30 PM.
- **Monday, April 12:** Leadership Summit, *Modernizing Head Start Programs: A Leadership Blueprint*, with Paul Behrman, 9:00 AM–2:30 PM.
- **Monday–Tuesday, April 12–13:** Fiscal Leadership Summit, two days.
- **Wednesday–Friday, April 14–16:** CLASS® Pre-K Observer Certification with Teachstone, three days, for a small cohort. It finishes Friday, April 16, so CLASS participants stay Thursday night and check out Friday, like every attendee.

Prices and registration: 2027.headstarteast.org/add-ons

Who should attend

Anyone who works with young children (birth to five) and their families, or who supports the people who do. That includes classroom staff, specialists who support children with disabilities and developmental delays, family and community engagement staff, managers, and the leaders and board members who oversee early childhood programs.

Content tracks and learning objectives

Participants will be able to:

Classroom & Curriculum

- Apply evidence-based strategies that build social-emotional skills and self-regulation in infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Plan engaging, inclusive routines, such as circle time, storytelling, and early literacy, that reach every child.

Mental Health & Family Support

- Respond to challenging behaviors using brain-based and trauma-informed approaches.
- Build strong partnerships with families, including fathers and male caregivers.

Health & Safety

- Implement active supervision and other practices that create a culture of safety.
- Promote nutrition, physical activity, and child health with children and families.

Family & Community Engagement

- Build relationship-based approaches to home visiting and family engagement.
- Strengthen community partnerships, including using technology to connect with families.

Leadership

- Use emotionally intelligent, adaptive, and reflective leadership practices to strengthen program culture.
- Strengthen supervision, governance, and readiness for federal monitoring.

Workforce Development & Staff Wellness

- Apply self-care and wellness practices that reduce stress and burnout.
- Use coaching and communication strategies that support staff growth and retention across generations.

Fiscal Leadership

- Apply federal fiscal requirements, including the Uniform Guidance, non-federal match, cost allocation, and financial reporting.
- Use fiscal planning to support program goals across multiple funding streams.

Inclusion & Neurodiversity

- Support children with disabilities and neurodivergent learners, including sensory needs, in inclusive classrooms.
- Partner with families, early intervention, and early childhood special education professionals to individualize support.

For a sense of the program: our 2026 conference in San Juan featured 90 expert speakers. Sessions included:

- Calming the Storm: Evidence-based Strategies to Address Toddler Aggression and Promote the Self-Regulation Skills Needed to Thrive
- Beyond Behavior: Understanding and responding to sensory needs in young children
- Inclusion Classrooms - Good for Children, Good for Business
- Building Belonging in Our Learning Communities
- Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: Tools for Head Start Supervisors & Educators
- Active Supervision: Creating + Enhancing a Culture of Safety
- Compassionate Coaching: Unlocking the Hidden Treasure in Teachers
- Heart Work: Embedding Wellness and Trauma Sensitivity into Head Start Culture
- Fathers Matter: Engaged Fathers impact on health outcomes for children, families and community.
- Smart Connections: Using AI to Strengthen Family Engagement
- Using Match (Non-Federal Share) to fund Program Objectives
- Literatura infantil para todos: El valor de leer y contar historias

2027 sessions will be selected through our call for presentations.

Registration: hsereg.org/2027/register · Full conference registration covers all general and breakout sessions, Monday–Thursday, plus Tuesday breakfast, the Wednesday gala dinner and Thursday breakfast. Add-on trainings are separate.
Questions: info@headstarteast.org · headstarteast.org · Updated October 21, 2026.

Daily schedule

Sunday, April 11 · Arrival day

Daytime	Add-on workshops (separate registration): Active Supervision with Melvin J. Gravely, 9:30 AM–3:30 PM, or Sunday Breathwork with Monica Rollins, 10:00 AM–3:00 PM. Most attendees arrive in the afternoon.

Monday, April 12 · Opening day

8:00–8:45 AM	Morning wellness session
8:00 AM	Registration opens
9:00 AM–2:30 PM	Add-ons (separate registration): Leadership Summit; Fiscal Leadership Summit, day 1 of 2
10:00–11:30 AM	Concurrent breakout sessions
11:30 AM–1:00 PM	Lunch on your own
1:00–2:30 PM	Concurrent breakout sessions
2:30 PM	Pleneros welcome in the main lobby
3:00–5:00 PM	Opening ceremony

Scheduled sessions: up to 5.75 hours

Tuesday, April 13 · Full breakout day

8:00–8:45 AM	Morning wellness session
8:00–9:00 AM	Breakfast (included)
9:00–9:45 AM	Coffee, Connections & Conversations
10:00–11:30 AM	Concurrent breakout sessions
11:30 AM–1:00 PM	Lunch on your own
1:00–2:30 PM	Concurrent breakout sessions
3:00–4:30 PM	Concurrent breakout sessions
All day	Fiscal Leadership Summit, day 2 of 2 (separate registration) · Vendor showcase in the hallways
7:00–10:00 PM	Karaoke night (optional)

Scheduled sessions: up to 5.25 hours

Wednesday, April 14 · Full breakout day

8:00–8:45 AM	Morning wellness session
9:00–9:45 AM	Coffee, Connections & Conversations
10:00–11:30 AM	Concurrent breakout sessions
11:30 AM–1:00 PM	Lunch on your own
1:00–2:30 PM	Concurrent breakout sessions
3:00–4:30 PM	Concurrent breakout sessions
All day	CLASS® Pre-K Observer Certification, day 1 of 3 (separate registration)
6:00 PM	Gala dinner (included)

Scheduled sessions: up to 5.25 hours

Thursday, April 15 · Closing day

8:00–8:45 AM	Morning wellness session
8:00–9:00 AM	Breakfast (included)
9:00 AM–12:00 PM	Closing general session
12:00 PM	Conference ends. Stay Thursday night and fly home Friday, April 16.
All day	CLASS® Pre-K Observer Certification, day 2 of 3 (day 3 is Friday, April 16)

Scheduled sessions: up to 3.75 hours

Total scheduled professional development: more than 18 hours, Monday through Thursday: general sessions, breakout sessions, and morning wellness sessions. Add-on trainings and evening events are additional.