



## Coach Tool

### **Professional Development Setting Checklist: A Literacy Coach's Tool for Planning and Assessing Professional Learning Settings**

By

Catherine Rosemary, Professor, John Carroll University  
Naomi Feldman, Professor, Baldwin-Wallace College

For Literacy and Instructional Coaches, Teacher Leaders, Administrators,  
Curriculum Directors, & Professional Development Facilitators

### **Purpose**

The Professional Development (PD) Setting Checklist is a tool to guide literacy coaches in planning and assessing professional development settings. As literacy coaches engage in careful planning, they can use the tool to consider the elements of a setting, including place, time, participants, activity, and materials. These elements are necessary and important for achieving the primary goal of professional development, which is to improve teaching to increase student learning. In well-designed settings, learning is the purpose of the coach's work with teachers. Many elements work together to create and sustain a social learning environment. Participants share common goals and expectations, and work creatively and productively to assist one another in accomplishing their goals. They collaborate in solving problems of practice. They engage in substantive conversations about teaching and student learning. They assess teaching effectiveness by continually assessing students' progress. They reflect on their work to make changes in instruction to improve students' performance.

A literacy coach may use the tool to plan how to structure professional development sessions to include elements that will support teacher learning. The tool may be used also to guide reflection on the effectiveness of professional development. Although the tool is primarily designed for literacy coaches, it may also be used by teacher leaders, administrators, curriculum directors and others who are involved in providing professional development. (For more information on professional development settings, please read the authors' brief on the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse Website titled "Professional Development Settings: More than Time, Place, Activity" at the following link: [http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/professional\\_development\\_setting\\_1.2.09.pdf](http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/briefs/professional_development_setting_1.2.09.pdf).)

### **Use**

The checklist is organized according to broad categories of design elements (Column A): common expectations, focus on learning, construction of meaningful activity, engagement in collaborative problem solving, and reflection on learning. Under each broad category are listed specific features that support learning. Column B lists various processes that may be considered when planning or assessing a professional devel-

opment setting. The list presents some concrete ways to think about features of professional learning settings and is not intended to be all inclusive. Columns C and D are for the coach to complete when planning and assessing professional development.

When using the PD Setting Checklist for planning, a literacy coach uses ideas from Column B to think about ways to represent specific elements (Column A) in the professional development setting. She lists her action steps in Column C. After a professional development session, the coach assesses its effectiveness by listing in Column D one or two examples in which the element was represented. Absence of an element should also be noted in Column D.

In using the tool, literacy coaches need to keep in mind the following:

- Because the goals, content focus, and activity may vary from one PD session to the next throughout a year, not all elements necessarily will be included in each session.
- Specificity is important in use of the tool. Details help preparation and also next steps. They are the nuts and bolts of what works in any kind of endeavor. The reasons for something working or not working well often lies in the details.
- When using the tool consistently for planning and assessing, a literacy coach has a systematic method of formative evaluation. A literacy coach can analyze the records and identify gaps, repetitions, and modifications, and, thereby, use the data to make decisions about the elements of professional development setting that support learning.

## Insights

Use of the checklist can yield insights about the structure of professional development settings, which support participants' learning. Intentionality in planning and assessing professional development is a key to achieving desired outcomes. Before professional development is implemented, planning how to support learning sets up the potential for success. After the PD session, assessing what elements contributed to the learning and using the feedback to plan and make adjustments in subsequent sessions sets in motion continuous, evidence-based professional development. Put simply, the tool can assist the coach and the teachers in being accountable for the time and effort they spend in professional development settings.

# Professional Development Setting Checklist

By Catherine Rosemary, Professor, John Carroll University  
Naomi Feldman, Professor, Baldwin-Wallace College

Column A Element of Setting	Column B Processes To Consider	Column C Plan List what you will do and the projected date of implementation.	Column D Assess Was the element represented? List the evidence and date the entry.
<b>Common Expectations:</b>			
Time, place, and duration are established and understood by participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ create schedule of PD at beginning of year</li> <li>_ set regular meeting times as part of the work day</li> <li>_ adhere to the PD schedule</li> <li>_ use technology in communication</li> </ul>		
Responsibilities for participants are clearly specified and understood before each meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ construct procedures for their meetings</li> <li>_ display expectations</li> <li>_ create and distribute agendas for each meeting</li> <li>_ maintain focus during PD sessions</li> </ul>		
Coach participates in or leads the planning and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ plan for the leadership of meetings</li> <li>_ record attendance sheet for each meeting</li> <li>_ identify leader or group facilitator</li> <li>_ provide support to leader or group facilitator</li> </ul>		
<b>Focus on Learning:</b>			
Goals are mutually established, clearly specified and limited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ construct professional learning goals from multiple sources of data, e.g., formal and informal student data, classroom observation data, survey data</li> <li>_ write goal statements that specify who, what, when, and how</li> <li>_ identify expected outcomes</li> <li>_ develop methods of monitoring progress and assessing outcomes</li> </ul>		
Activities are aligned with goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ ask and answer the question: "how does this activity help accomplish our goal?"</li> <li>_ explain how each activity leads to goal</li> <li>_ connect activities and build toward achieving goal</li> </ul>		
<b>Construct Meaningful Activity:</b>			
Make explicit links between theory and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ identify evidence based practices</li> <li>_ define and explain concepts</li> <li>_ access and build on prior knowledge</li> <li>_ apply concepts to teaching practice</li> </ul>		
Provide ample opportunity for substantive conversation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ allocate time for discussion</li> <li>_ listen</li> <li>_ ask questions that probe for information, explanation, clarification, rationale</li> <li>_ set up situations for peer critique</li> </ul>		
Adapt activity to address various aspects of the instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ use teaching examples from different grade levels and subject areas</li> <li>_ suggest and discuss alternative strategies</li> </ul>		

Column A Element of Setting	Column B Processes To Consider	Column C Plan List what you will do and the projected date of implementation.	Column D Assess Was the element represented? List the evidence and date the entry.
<b>Engage in Collaborative Problem Solving:</b>			
Collaborative problem solving is a central activity of the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ plan lessons</li> <li>_ analyze student work</li> <li>_ record observations</li> <li>_ critique video-based lesson</li> <li>_ plan assessments and analyze data</li> <li>_ interpret data</li> <li>_ evaluate teaching</li> </ul>		
Protocols are used to structure and guide the problem solving process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ use rubrics to analyze student work</li> <li>_ define procedures to guide analysis of teaching</li> <li>_ construct video-viewing guides to focus observations</li> <li>_ develop lesson plan templates</li> <li>_ design strategies to summarize, display and share data</li> </ul>		
<b>Reflect on Learning:</b>			
Time is allocated for reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ build in time during the session to take stock of new learning and summarize</li> <li>_ self-assess the effectiveness of the session</li> <li>_ reserve 5-10 minutes at the end of the session for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• summarizing</li> <li>• writing personal reflections on learning</li> <li>• providing feedback</li> <li>• assessing progress in meeting goals</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
Adaptations and revisions are considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ encourage self-assessment</li> <li>_ analyze feedback gathered from participants to identify patterns in responses</li> <li>_ use findings from analyses to plan next steps</li> </ul>		