

ASSESSING PD DELIVERY

What Should Quality Professional Development Look Like?

By Denise Uehara and Jan Jenner



Photo: Samdi Tacosika

► Good PD integrates the six standards for effective delivery listed below.

One of the key factors in school improvement is an effective instructional environment. Such an environment depends on well-trained, reflective teachers who get the professional development (PD) they need to refine their skills. To boost student achievement and invest time and resources wisely, administrators must ensure that PD is of good quality.

Professional organizations such as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT) have established standards and models for effective PD programs. Still needed, however, are standards that appropriately describe and an assessment instrument that accurately measures the quality of PD delivery. And although the evaluation forms typically filled out by participants at the end of PD presentations provide helpful feedback about the quality, usefulness, and impact of the presentation, they are not a substitute for a formal assessment process.

Through the Pacific Communities with High-performance in Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) project, the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) works with Pacific schools to improve early reading literacy.

Providing high-quality professional development that supports teachers' efforts to improve classroom instruction is crucial to Pacific CHILD's success. To fill the need for a process that measured the quality of REL PD delivery, staff developed six standards and an assessment instrument that measures them.

These standards are the basis for descriptors on the Professional

Pacific REL PD Delivery Standards

Standard 1. Facilitate learning and development through joint productive activity among PD providers and participants.

Standard 2. Promote learners' expertise in professionally relevant discourse.

Standard 3. Contextualize teaching, learning, and joint productive activity in the experiences and skills of participants.

Standard 4. Challenge participants toward more complex solutions in addressing problems.

Standard 5. Engage participants through dialogue (instructional conversation).

Standard 6. Demonstrate techniques and activities that are inclusive of and responsive to diverse cultural practices.

Development in Reading Observation (PDRO) form (see page 7), which REL staff use to evaluate the quality of PD delivery at Co-Development Partner School (CDPS) sites. These PD events range from formal group meetings to one-on-one coaching and mentoring sessions. They include individual as well as team delivery. PD activities are designed to embed knowledge and skill acquisition within a framework of teacher growth and development (see sidebars on page 6).

The purpose of the PDRO form is to provide an impression, or rather, a "thin" description, of training events at CDPS sites. A trained observer rates the inclusion of each of the six standards by assigning a value on a 5-point Likert-like scale. The use of numerical rankings allows for a cumulative score, making it possible to compare the quality of PD delivery at different events. Eventually, Pacific REL staff may be able to identify the point at which a particular score can be used to predict a desired outcome, such as a change in teacher behavior.

The Pacific REL standards and PDRO descriptors draw on effective PD strategies in teaching reading derived from the following research-based sources:

- standards of effective pedagogy developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE);
- research on adult learning; and
- literature on effective PD practices in teaching reading.

How professional development is delivered is just as important as what content is presented. The REL standards help set clear expectations for high-quality PD delivery, and the PDRO form helps determine whether these standards have been met. For more information about PDRO, contact Denise Uehara at uehara@prel.org.

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PD Delivery Should Include Productive Activity and Professional Discourse

By Denise Uehara

Although the following plan for a two-hour workshop for grade 1-3 teachers illustrates two of the Pacific REL's six standards for high-quality PD delivery, it is important to remember that any PD training should integrate all six standards. The standards highlighted in this scenario are facilitating learning and development through joint productive activity among PD providers and participants (Standard 1) and promoting learners' expertise in professionally relevant discourse (Standard 2).

The overall goal of the workshop is to improve classroom instruction in early reading in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific, and the specific objective is to increase teachers' understanding of grade-level expectations for student vocabulary. First, teachers indicate their expectations for student vocabulary, which a facilitator records. Next, they compare their expectations with education department standards. Finally, they participate in a joint productive activity, which is to develop grade-appropriate vocabulary word lists.



Photo: Deslin Portland

▷ Can you identify the facilitator in this workshop? One hallmark of high-quality PD delivery is joint productive activity.

The role of the Pacific REL staff in the workshop is to facilitate the professionally relevant discourse that leads to the generation of the vocabulary word lists. An

added benefit to this particular PD event is that the activity models a variety of approaches to learning new content – an important component of adult learning.

PD Delivery Should Be Inclusive and Contextualize Learning

By Susan Andrews

A training with Awak Elementary School teachers in Pohnpei, one of the Federated States of Micronesia, illustrates two more of the Pacific REL standards for quality PD in action: it should be inclusive and responsive (Standard 6), and it should contextualize teaching, learning, and joint productive activity (Standard 3).

At Awak, follow-up activities for a Pacific REL large-group training were redesigned in order to work constructively within Pacific social conventions. Noticing that many participants in the large-group training were silent, the PD providers brainstormed ways of creating more inclusive follow-up activities. Realizing that in Pacific cultures gender and status often play important roles in determining who may speak in specific contexts, the trainers decided to substitute one-on-one coaching sessions in teachers' classrooms instead of working in gender-balanced small groups as originally planned.

The trainers' flexibility and sensitivity paid off. In this context, even the more



Photo: Susan Andrews

▷ In this coaching session, the facilitator works with a student while the teacher observes.

silent participants responded to opportunities to comment and question, and facilitators were better able to assess individual levels of understanding and address specific needs. This alternative approach honored participants' need to show respect, a fundamental Pacific value, while providing a context within which they were comfortable taking an active part in

the teaching and learning process (Standard 6). The one-to-one learning experience was also effective because it drew on participants' knowledge and skills as a foundation to build new knowledge (Standard 3).

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Professional Development in Reading Observation (PDRO) Form

PD Provider:

School:

Date:

Observer:

Time and Duration of Observation:

Please check one of the following PD formats:

One to one

Team to one

One to small group*

Team to small group

One to large group

Team to large group

* small group refers to <10 persons

Please describe the PD event:

The PD Event

The PD Event	N/O**	EM	DV	EN	IN
1. Facilitates learning and development through joint productive activity among PD providers and participants <i>Participants work together for a common goal/product through a variety of approaches</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2. Promotes learners' expertise in professionally relevant discourse <i>The teaching/learning cycle is used and valued, such as intellectual, social, and emotional engagement with ideas, materials, and colleagues</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3. Contextualizes teaching, learning, and joint productive activity in the experiences and skills of participants <i>Participants' funds of knowledge and skills are used and valued as a foundation for new knowledge</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4. Challenges participants toward more complex solutions in addressing problems <i>Rationale for activity is consistently provided and theory is integrated with practice</i>	1	2	3	4	5
5. Engages participants through dialogue (instructional conversation) <i>The purpose/content is explicitly stated and appropriately referred to or explained</i> <i>Opportunities for teacher reflection are provided and valued</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6. Demonstrates techniques and activities that are inclusive of and responsive to diverse cultural practices <i>Instruction is flexible</i> <i>Instruction supports differences in learning preferences, language proficiency, etc.</i> <i>Instructional materials respond to participants' needs</i>	1	2	3	4	5

**N/O=NOT OBSERVED EM=EMERGING DV=DEVELOPING EN=ENACTING IN=INTEGRATING

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