



# Growing Professionally

By  
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## A Teacher's Story

**F**aith, an elementary school principal, declares, *I am proud of the staff for narrowing their professional development topics to informational text, text structure, vocabulary, and differentiated instruction for the next school year.* Continuing, she says, *Even though our staff is a diverse group, professional development research provides us with lots of guidance, and if we use that research well, our professional development efforts will be effective.*

Kaitlyn, the literacy coach, replies, *Okay, let's start with how we can address the professional development needs of the fifth grade. One teacher has 15 years of teaching experience, 7 of which have been in the fifth grade. Two of the teachers have 5 years of teaching experience each. Both have been teaching fifth grade for 2 years. The fourth teacher is new to the teaching profession. His student teaching experience was in the third grade.* Kaitlyn then asks, *How would you approach working with this group?*

Faith responds, *Think about how you learn and how we work with our students. Teachers need to understand the content of what they are learning, the research supporting why it is important, and the specific strategies or how teachers are going to deliver instruction in the classroom. They need modeling and explicit instruction, time to try new strategies, and support and feedback on how they can improve. Teachers' learning process is similar to that of students.*

*You have been the school's literacy coach for the past 5 years and a classroom teacher for 12 years. I have seen how your knowledge of literacy and your natural ability to interact with teachers have contributed to their professional growth. If you were not effective, I wouldn't have kept you in this position,* says Faith. *So let's talk about what exactly you mean by a diverse group of teachers.*

Kaitlyn begins, *Well, even though Sheila has 15 years of experience, I notice she is inconsistent with her instruction. There are times when she is implementing these amazing hands-on integrated curriculum units, and then there are times when I see her implementing something mundane, like round-robin reading followed by a fill-in-the-blank worksheet. Sheila is extremely effective with teaching science and social studies, so we'll need to show her how to transfer her effective content area teaching into language arts. I have a positive collegial relationship with Sheila, so that's a plus. Chase and Melissa have the potential to be very effective. Like Sheila, they have moments of excellence. Chase seems more willing to try new things and keeps working*

on them until he fully understands. He is quite reflective, unafraid to ask questions, and open to receiving feedback. Melissa is the risk taker and always the first to try things. However, she tends to try things once or twice, and if things do not work out, she abandons the whole idea and is not willing to go any further. If things work out, she keeps refining her practice and shares her successes with others. Joshua is new to the profession and will probably need more guidance and support than the other three.

Wow, you know much more about these teachers than I realized, says Faith. I have said on many occasions that our school's philosophy about learning, regardless of the person being a teacher or a student, is to start with the learner's knowledge and then determine what methods and content are best for the individual to learn. I was thinking about that last district meeting where the principal discussed how he used a multifaceted approach to professional development in which teachers engage in various learning activities based on their needs throughout the year. I was amazed when he said that now all of his teachers are on board, even the initial resisters. I think our staff needs more support than we have been offering.

Well, for the past few years, we have implemented workshops and conducted classroom observations. Oh, and last year, we had mediocre success with study groups, says Kaitlyn. Are you thinking we need to change how we conduct professional development here?

I think so, confirms Faith. What we have done in the past was okay, but research on professional development indicates that our efforts weren't ongoing and engaging enough. Teachers remained unmotivated to learn and grow. We have taken the first step. Teachers have told us **what** they would like to learn. Our next steps are to create a sustained professional development program to support teachers in knowing **why** they need to learn these strategies and **how** they will implement them in the classroom for the next school year.

So how do we do that with these teachers? Kaitlyn asks.

Well, because they are so diverse, I'm thinking we need to ensure that our professional development activities incorporate what we have learned from research. Also, because there are individual differences in teachers, just as there are in kids, we may need to adjust each activity to each teacher's ability or place in the learning process.

I feel more overwhelmed now, says Kaitlyn.

*You're excellent at your job, Kaitlyn, says Faith. I am confident that rethinking how we conduct professional development will help you grow too. Let me see if I can contact a principal who has successfully used research on professional development to help teachers in a school such as ours.*

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## Introduction

**G***rowing Professionally* provides principals, literacy coaches, and teachers with a guide for conducting professional development at the local-school level. It is based on experience in conducting professional development in the Pacific Communities with High-performance In Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) program (see Appendix A), research findings on effective professional development (see Appendix B), and professional standards (see Appendix C). The practical assistance that this booklet provides is designed to help local school personnel implement the content of Pacific CHILD booklets, as well as other aspects of effective teaching.

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## Background

**W**hen most teachers hear the term *professional development*, they envision a workshop or meeting they have to attend. However, professional development is much more than that. It encompasses a variety of efforts to improve in-service teachers' knowledge, their instructional practice, and their students' learning outcomes.

There are two major kinds of professional development activities. The first is districtwide and includes institutes and workshops. Districtwide professional development is typically general in nature; that is, presenters describe broad issues of teaching and learning that the district intends for all district schools to incorporate (for examples of institutes and workshops employed districtwide by Pacific CHILD, see Appendix A).

The second kind of professional development is in-service, conducted at the local-school level, and includes workshops, lesson demonstrations, observations, and professional learning communities. Unlike districtwide professional development, school-level professional development is designed to meet the specific needs of a particular school, school staff, and/or students. **The purpose of this booklet is to describe ways to implement professional development at the school level.**

Two people are key to successful school-level professional development: the school principal and the literacy coach.

The principal provides school-level leadership about the purpose and focus of professional development efforts and the positive support teachers need in order to initiate and sustain change. School-level professional development is seldom successful unless the principal is a visible, supportive, consistent, and engaging force.

The literacy coach is a skilled staff person with extensive knowledge in reading, writing, and oral communication (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Literacy coaches create a learning community by working with teachers in the classroom and/or during schoolwide activities (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoni, 2011; Strickland, 2002). Examples include establishing professional learning communities, modeling, and observing lessons in the classroom. Literacy coaching is not telling the teacher what is right or wrong. Rather, it is a collaborative process of working with teachers as they learn how to make informed



decisions (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Literacy coaches think of ways to encourage and support teachers' efforts (Moran, 2007; Stover et al., 2011). "When literacy coaches build a learning community where they are positioned as nonthreatening and are able to lead teachers in establishing goals and areas of needed professional development, teachers are more likely to buy in and have ownership as a result of having a vested interest and voice" (Stover et al., 2011, p. 508).

According to Tomlinson and McTighe (as cited in Stover et al., 2011, p. 499), literacy coaches should consider three things when working with teachers. They should support teachers by differentiating the following:

1. The content being presented.
2. The process by which the information is learned.
3. How teachers implement the learned information in their classroom with students.

For school-level professional development to be successful, both the principal and the literacy coach must be fully committed to gaining the trust of their teachers and to engaging them collaboratively in the effort. Further, they need to ensure that professional development activities are based on principles of adult learning, key findings from professional development research, and learning outcomes data. These characteristics of effective school-level professional development are described below, followed by examples of how to implement four types of professional development at the local-school level.



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## What Makes for Successful Professional Development?

Successful school-level professional development starts with teacher ownership of the purposes. Once initiated, the professional development activities themselves must incorporate principles of adult learning, findings from research on professional development, and evidence of learning outcomes.

### Principles of Adult Learning

Adults come to professional development with a wide range of experiences, knowledge, and skills (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Strickland, 2002). Like students, adults are motivated to learn if there is something they *want* to learn more about (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Consequently, a first priority for principals and literacy coaches is to ensure that teachers buy in to the purpose of the professional development. A constructivist approach works best to accomplish this (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Through this approach, adults engage in social activities (for example, conversations, debates) with other people who share a similar concern or purpose. As adults interact, their beliefs and past experiences are used to refine existing knowledge and create new understandings (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). The examples provided in this booklet use the Pacific method of *talk story* to involve teachers' purposeful interactions about professional development ideas, and vignettes are provided for each example to illustrate the process. *Talk story* is when one person shares a story while others contribute to the conversation (Taosaka, 2002).

According to Friend and Cook (as cited in Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Strickland, 2002), other key attributes of adult learning include the following:

- Adults are problem solvers. When a challenge arises, not only do they want to solve the problem quickly, but they also want to be part of the process that decides how the problem can be solved.
- Adults want to be a part of the decision-making process when subject matter is being determined for professional development.
- Adults are goal-oriented. They usually have a time frame for when they would like to reach their goals.
- Adults are flexible learners.
- Adults have high expectations.
- Adults have many commitments and many demands on their time.
- Adults are generally motivated to learn.

## Applying Principles of Adult Learning

In the Pacific CHILD program, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL Pacific) staff used principles of adult learning and designed professional development activities based on the premise that teachers learn best when they do the following (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning [PREL], 2007; Rueda, 1998):

- *Do activities together.* Teachers should collaborate and discuss curriculum-related topics within a professional learning community. The group activities should be designed so participants can speak freely and learn from each other and with each other.
- *Engage in the language of reading.* Professional development should focus on one specific topic. Participants should be exposed to key concepts in reading and should engage in different activities to solidify their understanding. For example, although teachers may be aware of text features, text structures, and text patterns, they must also be able to clearly articulate the meaning using the language of reading.
- *Use local school curricula and resources.* Using existing materials from teachers' classrooms during professional development activities enables teachers to see how familiar resources can be used differently. It also empowers teachers to think, *I am able to do this because I have the resources I need.*

- *Help each other work through difficult teaching situations.*

Teachers should work in small groups to plan lessons for students, decide together whether



the lesson should be delivered by one teacher or through a team-teaching approach, and afterward debrief together using guiding questions such as, *What was effective? What could be improved?* This process helps teachers learn how to be reflective about their contributions and practices and how to give constructive feedback to their peers.

- *Talk with each other about teaching and learning.* Teachers should be encouraged to plan lessons together. In so doing, they can exchange ideas and bring to the conversation their best collective thinking.

- *Use practices that fit their cultural contexts.* Professional development activities should be embedded in the cultural practices of the region. In the Pacific, for example, many cultures are rooted in the tradition of sharing knowledge and teaching others through oral communication, so it is helpful when teachers can interact with others and share their thinking in pairs, small groups, and whole groups.

### Key Findings From Research on Professional Development

Research on effective professional development has resulted in six key features: focus on content; time and duration; coherence; collaboration; supportive environment; and focus on student learning.

- *Focus on content* refers to the subject matter teachers will learn in the professional development program (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The subject matter should be relevant to what teachers will use to teach their students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009), and the number of topics should be minimal so teachers can learn about them in depth rather than superficially. Teachers need a solid understanding of the subject matter if they are expected to teach this information to students (Garet et al., 2001). They also need to know the current research on why it is important to teach this subject matter and how students will best learn it, as well as examples of how it would look when implemented in the classroom and strategies for implementation. (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).
- *Time and duration* refers to the length of the professional development. Teachers who participated in ongoing professional development throughout the year saw an increase in student achievement (Garet et al., 2001; Duffy & Kear, 2007; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). According to the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110)*, professional development is “not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).
- *Coherence* refers to creating professional development activities that are aligned with other professional development efforts. Garet and colleagues (2001) indicate that effective professional development consists of: (1) consistency and coherence among what teachers have already learned and builds upon that knowledge; (2) subject matter that is aligned with standards, assessments, and frameworks; and (3) an “ongoing professional communication with other teachers who are trying to change their teaching in similar ways” (p. 927).

- *Collaboration* refers to how teachers interact and engage with one another to make conscious decisions about improving instruction. Collaboration that encourages reflective inquiry helps teachers examine what they or their colleagues are doing and why (Duffy & Kear, 2007; Pinnell & Rodgers, 2004). In a technical report on professional development, Wei and colleagues (2009) found that teachers in South Korea rotate teaching different subjects to the same group of students. These teachers also share a common office space, so the opportunity to collaborate and plan is much easier.
- *Supportive environment* refers to how teachers are involved with making decisions about their professional growth. Teachers need an environment in which they can openly discuss problems, identify ways to solve them, and feel they are being supported while trying to do so (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Showers & Joyce, 1996).
- *Focus on student learning* refers to teachers' knowing how students learn and determining whether their instruction is making an impact by examining students' work samples, test scores, and grades.

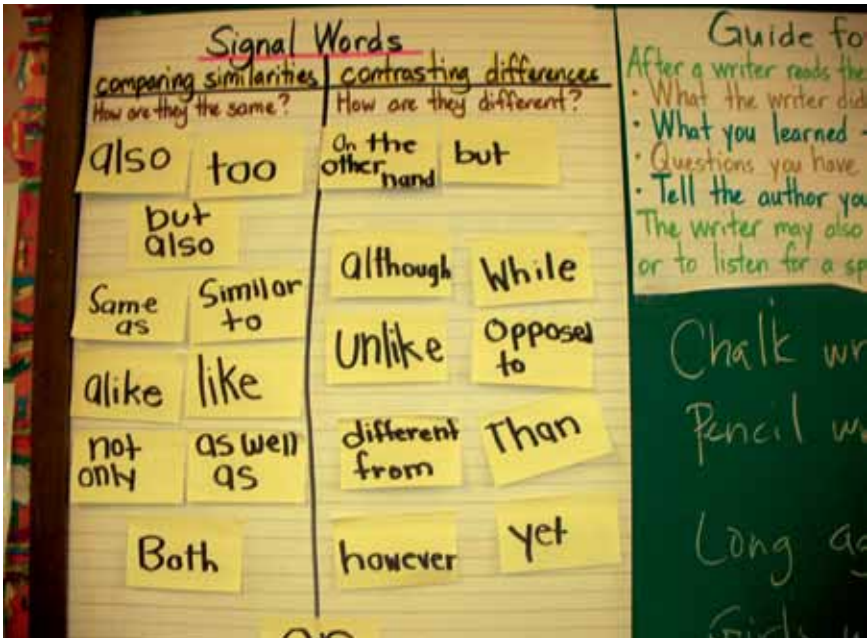
Professional development activities will not be effective automatically. They will be effective only to the extent that they give teachers a voice and to the extent that they incorporate principles of adult learning and key findings from research on professional development based on the needs of the context.





## Examples of How To Conduct Four Kinds of Local-School-Level Professional Development

In this section, we present descriptions of four types of school-level professional development activities: workshops, lesson demonstrations, observations, and professional learning communities. To help school-level professional developers implement such activities, each description is followed by an illustrative vignette in the talk story format. Following each vignette is a section highlighting how the activity incorporates research and other characteristics of successful professional development. Reflective questions designed to provoke the reader to think about how to implement these activities are then posed to encourage participant reflection (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Stover et al., 2011).



The vignettes are a continuation of “A Teacher’s Story.” Faith is the principal, and Kaitlyn is the school’s literacy coach. Kaitlyn is supporting the fifth grade teachers (Chase, Joshua, Melissa, and Sheila) with their implementation of the text structure of compare and contrast.

## School-Level Workshops

A workshop is a presentation of information or subject matter to a group of teachers. A workshop can be district-directed or school-directed. When directed by the district, an outside expert or team of experts makes the presentation. Typically, district-level workshops are information-giving sessions, with the presenter using a lecture format, with limited interaction between presenter and audience, and with limited follow-up to determine whether teachers apply the information in their teaching (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Strickland, 2002).



School-level workshops differ from district-level workshops in several ways. First, school-level workshops bring together either the entire school staff or smaller teams of teachers (such as grade-level teams). They are typically led by school personnel, rather than outside experts. Sometimes the principal leads, sometimes the literacy coach leads, and sometimes an individual teacher or group of teachers leads. Rather than utilizing a lecture format, school-level workshops typically focus on sharing in a spirit of collaboration, with interaction and conversation much in evidence. Whereas district-level workshops are often one-day events, school-level workshops typically link one workshop to the next, with specific follow-up to ensure that content is applied in classrooms, a feature that increases the possibility that instructional change will occur (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

## School-Level Workshops

Faith, the principal, and Kaitlyn, the literacy coach, have been working closely with the fifth grade team of four teachers on how to integrate information text into their daily literacy instruction. Two of the four teachers have made impressive progress in doing so, and their students' work samples reflect a growing understanding of how to use information text, whereas the other two teachers are having more difficulty in finding ways to integrate information text into their daily literacy instruction. The team, together with Faith and Kaitlyn, plan a 1-hour workshop in which the two teachers who have been using informational text in their teaching share examples of what they have been doing and how those efforts are reflected in their students' work samples. The focus is on working together to help each other, with much conversational back-and-forth discussion of how the ideas of the two teachers can be incorporated into the other two classrooms. Ideas of all four teachers are discussed. As a next step, the group decides to jointly plan subsequent fifth grade literacy lessons in which all four teachers work to incorporate information text. The principal and the literacy coach will each team-teach the lessons with one of the two less-experienced teachers to support them as they move toward becoming independent in their use of information text.



## How This Workshop Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Successful Professional Development

- There is a focus on content, but the amount of content is limited.
- The effort is collaborative, nonthreatening, and nonevaluative.
- There is coherent follow-up in classrooms over time.
- Student outcomes guide the teachers' efforts.
- The atmosphere is supportive and nonthreatening.
- The reference point is teachers' own classrooms using their own materials.

## In the Workshop, Teachers Learn the Following:

- They discover ways to help each other improve their literacy teaching.
- Sharing teaching ideas is a valuable tool.
- Improving teaching skills involves longitudinal effort.

## Reflective Questions

1. How can you ensure that you are an active participant in school-level workshops?
2. What is the role of the principal and the literacy coach in school-level workshops?
3. If you are a literacy coach, how can you motivate your colleagues to actively engage in school-level workshops?
4. If you are a principal, in what ways can you provide school-level workshops to accommodate all teachers' needs?
5. What makes for a successful school-level workshop?



## Lesson Demonstrations

Teacher modeling and explicit instruction is invaluable in helping students learn. When teachers are learning, they too should receive such assistance. One way to provide this assistance is through the use of lesson demonstrations. A lesson demonstration is when one teacher (usually a literacy specialist) implements an exemplary lesson in the classroom with students while a teacher or a group of teachers observe (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007). This makes the professional development authentic and job-embedded. Such demonstrations are powerful professional development activities because teachers can observe *how* a teaching strategy is implemented with students and because the demonstration is a shared experience, providing a foundation for group discussion (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007).

Lesson demonstrations benefit the literacy coach as well. By working with students in the classroom, the literacy coach gains a better understanding of the realities of what the classroom teacher is currently experiencing and, therefore, is better equipped to provide the teacher with targeted and effective support. Also, because it is a literacy coach conducting the lesson demonstrations, teachers are not threatened (Godt, 2008), and a closer bond often results between the literacy coach and the teachers.



## Lesson Demonstrations

During a previous grade-level meeting, the teachers agreed to observe a lesson demonstration in Joshua's fifth grade classroom. The desired learning outcomes for this activity are for teachers to understand how to integrate the text structure of compare and contrast, and how to integrate differentiated instruction using informational texts. At the end of the demonstration, the teachers will debrief the lesson. Kaitlyn, the literacy coach, will use the comments during the debriefing as a measure of their understanding.

Prior to the lesson demonstration, Kaitlyn meets with Joshua to identify his needs and the needs of his students. This information will help Kaitlyn plan—she knows how critical it is to demonstrate a lesson that is relevant to the context of the classroom. During the conversation with Joshua, Kaitlyn learns the following:

- Joshua created four different reading groups using data from a diagnostic reading assessment.
- Students' reading levels range from third to seventh grade.
- Students understand the concept of compare and contrast but find it challenging to identify its pattern in text. (The text pattern in compare and contrast is finding the similarities and differences between two or more topics.)
- Joshua wants to learn how signal words can be used as a teaching strategy. *Signal words* are specific words that help readers understand which type of text structure is being used. Words and phrases such as *similarly*, *differences*, and *compared to* cue readers that the author is using the text structure of compare and contrast.

Because Faith, the principal, believes in job-embedded staff development, she arranges for classroom coverage so other teachers can attend the lesson demonstration. She believes that being present during the demonstration gives teachers a shared learning experience and a much richer debriefing at the end of the lesson (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007). She also knows that when Kaitlyn uses the school's existing curriculum, teachers will deepen their understanding of how to use their regular materials. Faith hopes that misconceptions regarding a need to change the current curriculum will be somewhat minimized.

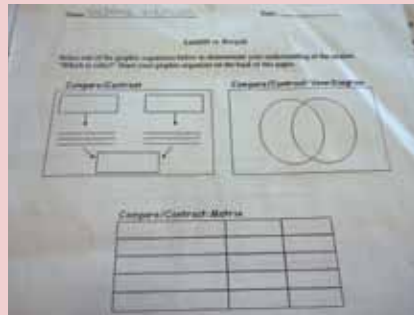
Before the demonstration, Kaitlyn explains the conversation she had with Joshua and how he helped plan the lesson. She further explains the lesson objectives and how students' learning will be assessed (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007). Kaitlyn gives the teachers a copy of her lesson plan and a Lesson Demonstration Form (see Appendix D). The purpose of the Lesson Demonstration Form is to provide teachers with

questions to guide their thinking while observing, since having a group conversation would disrupt the lesson.

Kaitlyn explains, *Joshua shared that students are struggling with identifying compare and contrast in print, using signal words as a strategy in reading and writing, and identifying the similarities and differences between whales and dolphins. I will model how these strategies are used and then have students work in their groups to orally generate sentences using the signal words. Students will then write statements using the content and signal words.*

Chase asks, *Are small groups the only way you plan to differentiate?*

Kaitlyn responds, *The other differentiation includes how students are taking notes. Kaitlyn shows the different graphic organizers each group will be using. One group will use a question guide, another group will be using a matrix, and another group will use a T chart. I*



*chose this differentiation because I have a good idea about their reading levels, but I don't fully understand who the students are as writers. I'm also scaffolding throughout the process because of the wide range of reading levels. One group will read independently. Two groups will pair up with a partner to read the entire text. The fourth group will also pair up with a partner to read but will read one section at a time, discuss, then write notes.*

Sheila sighs loudly and says, *Oh, my, it sounds like you spent a lot of time creating different activities.*

Kaitlyn responds, *I only created different forms of the graphic organizers and I gave each of you a template. I'm using the text that all of you have in your classroom library. I think that when you see the lesson, you'll realize I didn't spend enormous amounts of time creating different activities.*

During the lesson, the teachers take notes on the observation using the Lesson Demonstration Form (Appendix D). There are moments when they whisper to each other, but they soon realize that their whispering distracts them from observing what Kaitlyn is doing with the students, and now they understand the purpose of the guiding questions on the form.

At the end of the lesson, the teachers gather to debrief the lesson demonstration using the Lesson Demonstration Form.

Kaitlyn asks, *What did you find effective in the lesson?*

Melissa responds, *I thought your student-friendly definition of compare and contrast was clear and concise. I also felt that your*

*explanation of signal words was effective. You explicitly taught students they need to remember that signal words are just signals. Students need to look around the word, first to figure out if the author is identifying similarities or differences, and then determine what information is being compared.*

*I do have a different question though, continues Melissa. I noticed there were some things you didn't address in your lesson even though they were stated in the lesson plan. For example, is there any particular reason you stayed with having the whole group practice writing signal words versus allowing students to practice independently?*

*Kaitlyn responds, Good observation. I noticed in the lesson that most students used more than one signal word in a sentence despite the many reminders to use only one word. For example, one sentence I heard was Whales and dolphins are different because whales eat plankton and on the other hand dolphins eat fish. Though most students understood the text, I felt there was still confusion about how signal words help compare information in writing. If I had moved on, they probably would have struggled.*

*Sheila interjects, But you took a step back and offered more support. I liked how you took students' sentences, placed them on the board, and corrected the sentences as a group. I think you honored their work and explicitly showed how the use of one signal word clearly shows the comparison of facts.*

*Joshua chimes in, So it's okay for us to abandon the lesson plan?*

*Kaitlyn replies, I wouldn't say to abandon the lesson plan but rather to slow down your lesson and make changes as needed. The important thing to remember when you are teaching is that you have to adapt your instruction to what's happening in the moment. Your decisions are based on whether the students are learning or are becoming frustrated. If they are frustrated, you need to stop, take a step or two back, and figure out how to redirect your lesson.*

*Chase adds, I think if I were to implement this lesson in my classroom, I would start with using sentence frames. My students need more writing support beyond an anchor card with signal words.*

The group continues discussing other effective practices they observed, what they would have done differently, and how they could adapt any of the techniques to use in their classroom. They look at student examples to help Joshua think about his next steps. They agree that students still need help understanding how to find the text pattern and how to use signal words effectively.

After school, Kaitlyn meets with Faith to discuss the lesson demonstration.

Kaitlyn says, *I feel good about the lesson. I believe it was effective. Teachers observed me using explicit language and modeling how to help students learn to identify compare and contrast in print and also to use signal words as a strategy. I didn't get through the entire lesson, and we discussed how as teachers we need to adapt our teaching based on the moment and change directions when needed.*

*Oh, I'm actually glad the lesson didn't go as planned, replies Faith. Teachers need to realize that lessons are not recipes. Lessons are meant to be a guide and not a script. You're right—teachers needed to see how to be flexible and use their expertise to adapt their teaching to what's currently happening. How did the conversation end and what are the grade level's next steps?*

*This is interesting. Melissa asked if I could help her plan a lesson and is open to being observed, and Chase and Sheila want to try out the lesson I did in their classroom, responds Kaitlyn. I was hesitant at first because I know we want teachers to implement their own lesson, but I agreed to let them replicate the lesson. Chase is willing to be observed. However, Sheila was adamant about NOT being observed. She did agree to having a conference after the lesson and sharing student samples. Since the same lesson plan was being used, she felt that I already knew what was going to happen. I don't know how this will work out, but at least Sheila wants to try.*

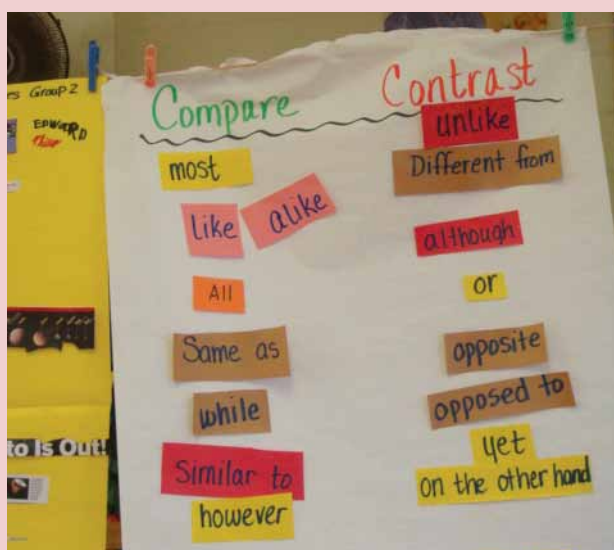
*Faith said, Well, I'm glad you agreed to let them use your lesson. Sometimes teachers need to replicate what has been done as part of their learning process. And although Sheila is resisting being observed, I'm glad to hear she is open to having a conference afterward. It will be a good thing because she will be able to reflect on her practices. What about Joshua?*

*Kaitlyn replied, Joshua asked not to be observed either. Instead, he asked if I could do another lesson demonstration for his class as a follow-up to this one. I agreed to do one more lesson demo for him and said that we would then co-teach the third lesson. I know that as a new teacher, he needs the added support.*

*You know Kaitlyn, says Faith, I find it extremely validating that you honor where teachers are with their learning. I think it's great that Joshua recognizes that he wants a follow-up to this lesson and that he isn't ready to implement a compare and contrast lesson independently. Co-teaching is like guided practice with students (Moran, 2007). And Melissa—what a risk taker for diving in and acknowledging the need to plan collaboratively! Don't worry about Chase and Sheila. Even though they'll use your lesson plan, they will soon find out they need to adapt it because their students are different from Joshua's and their teaching style is different from yours. What did you learn from this experience, Kaitlyn? I hope you realize this is professional development for you as well.*



Kaitlyn replies, *I actually learned a lot. I realized that lesson demonstrations force me to be in the shoes of classroom teachers. I need to know students' needs and carefully plan how to meet them. Also, we were able to receive authentic professional development in OUR school, with OUR students, using OUR existing curriculum. Hopefully, teachers will understand that they don't necessarily need the newest materials to teach effectively. But the powerful thing was the shared experience and the debriefing. Though I already knew this, teaching is really isolated work. And the teachers were able to share examples that they otherwise might not have observed. And finally, when they asked why I kept students working in a whole group, I told them I made the decision unconsciously. This question helped me to be metacognitive and to think about what I had done and why. I haven't done that in a while.*



## **How This Lesson Demonstration Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Successful Professional Development**

- The literacy coach and classroom teacher work together closely.
- The content is selected for demonstration based on assessment of student learning outcomes.
- The language of reading is used.
- The normal curriculum materials are used.
- There is opportunity for talk and discussion among teachers, with the Lesson Observation Form employed as a guide.
- It is assumed that it will take time for many teachers to implement what was demonstrated.
- Differences in teachers' learning are honored.

### **In the Lesson Demonstration, Teachers Learn the Following:**

- Lesson plans are meant to guide the teacher through the lesson.
- Teachers need to make decisions based on how students are reacting to the lesson.
- A shared learning experience promotes collegiality and reflective discussion.
- Everyone has ideas and strategies to share.
- Professional development opportunities should be designed to meet the needs of the teachers.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. If you are a classroom teacher, how would you benefit from participating in a lesson demonstration?
2. If you are a literacy coach, what would be the benefits of implementing lesson demonstrations? What challenges would you encounter, and how would you resolve them?
3. If you are a principal, what can you do to implement lesson demonstrations at your school? What conditions must be in place before you start? How do you sustain this type of professional development effort?
4. Is it necessary for teachers to document what they observe during a lesson demonstration?
5. Why is it important for the literacy coach to facilitate the discussion with all participating teachers at the end of a lesson demonstration?



## Classroom Observations

A classroom observation is when another staff person observes a classroom teacher teaching a lesson. Often the observer is a literacy coach or an administrator, but sometimes it is also advantageous for classroom teachers to observe and coach each other. Classroom observations can be used to support teachers as they work to change their practices. But when classroom observation is used for professional development purposes, it should be made clear that the observation will not be used to evaluate teachers.

Classroom observations have three parts: a preconference, an observation, and a postconference (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001); and they require time and effort on the part of both the principle and the literacy coach to schedule and implement (Guskey, 2000). Each part is described in the following pages.

### Part 1: Preconference

The preconference is designed to help the teacher think through the lesson prior to teaching and to give the teacher the opportunity to request specific assistance. The teacher shares what she or he plans to teach, why these decisions were made, how the lesson will be delivered, and how the lesson's effectiveness will be determined (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Learning Forward, 2001). The observer gathers information about the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). There may also be instances when the observer can guide or offer suggestions on how to alter the lesson (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). The preconference is also used to determine the type of feedback the classroom teacher would like to receive (for example, *What specific feedback would you like about your teaching?*). See Appendix E for a suggested Preconference Form that can be used to guide both the observer and the observed.

## Melissa's Preconference

Melissa and Kaitlyn meet for Melissa's preconference.

During her preconference, Melissa shares with Kaitlyn, *My students know the concept of compare and contrast, but like Joshua's students, they have difficulty seeing the similarities and differences in text. I thought maybe I'd have my students highlight the text using two different colors. The colors will establish a pattern. For example, when the information is about blue whales, then they'll highlight it in blue. When the information is on humpback whales, students will highlight it in red. What do you think about that?*

*I think that's creative, and the highlighting will definitely show whether humpback whales or blue whales are being discussed,* responds Kaitlyn. *But what happens if both whales are discussed in the same statement?*

*What do you mean?* asks Melissa.

*Well, remember in my lesson, there was a sentence Both whales and dolphins live in the Pacific Ocean?* asks Kaitlyn. *Which color would the student use to highlight that information? Does your text have statements such as those where both topics are addressed?*

*Oh, I never thought of that,* says Melissa.

*Well, let's look at the text and see if this may pose a challenge for students,* responds Kaitlyn.

*Darn it, there are so many of these statements,* exclaims Melissa. *Ugh. I just spent so much time figuring out this idea.*

*No worries, Melissa. Why don't you just use a third color for statements in which both topics are addressed?* Kaitlyn suggests.

*Oh, that's a good idea,* says Melissa, calming down.

*Then what will the students do with this highlighted information?* asks Kaitlyn.

*What do you mean?* says Melissa.

*Well, you're having students spend an enormous amount of time highlighting—how will you figure out if students learned how to identify the similarities and differences between humpback whales and blue whales?*

*I haven't gotten that far. I just thought I would look at their highlights to see if it made a pattern. Gosh, this good idea is taking a turn for the worse,* says Melissa, feeling discouraged. *Maybe I should have been smart like Sheila and asked not to be observed.*

*Being observed is a good idea, Melissa. Sometimes you need to be the skydiver of the group and just put your parachute on and dive in. I appreciate your courage. Teaching students what to highlight and what not to highlight is a skill. So let's highlight the text and put ourselves in the students' shoes. We will learn what challenges they will encounter, and we can think of ways to address those challenges up front. I believe it's very important for students to connect what they read to writing, so maybe the highlighted information can contribute to a writing piece. I know you feel discouraged. My role is to support you. I won't let you free-fall to the ground. We will get through this together.*

*Thanks, says Melissa. I'm glad we met before the lesson. It would have been a total disaster if I went through the lesson as originally designed.*

As a result of the preconference, Melissa and Kaitlyn wrote a separate sample text on chart paper. Melissa will model how to highlight information to show how the text pattern of compare and contrast (explaining similarities and differences between topics) can be found using a sample text with a familiar topic. They both agree that from this modeling, Melissa will gain information to determine whether students understand how to find the text pattern and whether to proceed with having students work in whole groups, small groups, or in pairs.

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### **Melissa's Sample Text**

There are many ways people can exercise. Our fifth grade class agreed that riding a bicycle or a scooter is their favorite way to exercise. But how are they the same? Riding a scooter and a bicycle is best when there is a large space and a smooth surface, especially outdoors. Also, the bicycle and the scooter require the rider to use a lot of leg muscles. Another similarity is that the bicycle and the scooter require the rider to use the handlebars to control the direction of the scooter and bike.

There are a few differences too. When riding a bicycle, the rider can sit on a seat, but the rider on the scooter cannot. There is not a seat on the scooter. Another difference is that the scooter has three wheels, and most bicycles have only two wheels. This makes it easier for people to balance on a scooter than on a bicycle. The big difference, though, is that bicycles have brakes, which makes it easy for the rider to stop. However, to stop a scooter, the rider usually has to use his or her foot. This can be painful if the rider isn't using appropriate shoes.

In conclusion, we know that riding a bicycle or a scooter is a great way to exercise. Knowing the similarities and differences can help some people decide which one may be best for them.

## **How This Preconference Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Successful Professional Development**

- The relationship between Kaitlyn and Melissa is one of trust.
- Kaitlyn works with Melissa in a collaborative way but also provides assistance.
- The content is clear and ties in nicely with what came before with Joshua.
- Kaitlyn encourages Melissa to consider desired learning outcomes.
- Local curricula and materials are used.

## **In the Preconference, Kaitlyn and Melissa Learn the Following:**

- Explicit modeling of what students are expected to do is critical to the lesson. Modeling gives students a starting point that will eventually lead to guided and independent practice. In this example, modeling included helping students find a way to identify key information in text and helping them recognize similarities and differences.
- Reading and understanding the text and activities before the lesson can prevent pitfalls.
- Lesson activities need to support the lesson's desired learning outcomes. In this example, Melissa focused on having students find the text pattern of compare and contrast.
- Teachers may become discouraged and need support.
- Teachers and observers learn from each other and with each other.

## **Reflective Questions**

1. If you and your colleagues decide to engage in preconference dialogue, what conditions must be in place before you start?
2. How would you benefit from participating in a preconference with a literacy coach? What challenges would you encounter and how would you resolve them?
3. Do you feel that it is necessary to have a preconference, a classroom observation, and a postconference to become a reflective practitioner? Why or why not?
4. If you are a literacy coach, how do you establish collegial relationships with teachers so they view your role as supportive rather than evaluative?

## **Part 2: The Observation**

Classroom observations are important because, as Guskey (2000) states, “One of the best ways to learn is by observing others or by being observed and receiving specific feedback from that observation” (p. 23). The primary goal for the observer is to focus on the needs identified by the teacher as established through a preconference. For example, a teacher may request feedback to determine the effectiveness of his or her instruction on graphic organizers.

During the observation, the observer notes elements from the lesson that could be used to promote teacher reflection and analytical thinking during the postconference (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007). There are various methods to document observations (for example, written or typed notes, video recording), but the goal is to select the method that is comfortable for the observer and not distracting for the teacher.

Although both the observer and the teacher can benefit from the classroom observation (Guskey, 2000), it is not unusual for teachers to be sensitive about classroom observations. They are accustomed to working alone with their students, and having another person in the classroom may cause some teachers to feel self-conscious. In addition, teachers will be more reluctant to be observed if they suspect the information will be used for evaluative purposes (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Principals and literacy coaches must work hard to alleviate these feelings, and even then it may take some time for such feelings to abate.

## Chase's Fifth Grade Classroom Observation

Before observing the lesson, Kaitlyn, the literacy coach, reviews the feedback Chase requested during a preconference. He asked Kaitlyn to observe the following:

- His use of explicit language to explain the concept of compare and contrast
- His students' ability to use signal words in their writing
- His students' ability to find the similarities and differences between whales and dolphins

Kaitlyn plans to document the observation in writing. In addition to documenting evidence from Chase's request, Kaitlyn's goal as a literacy coach is to observe how Chase adapts the lesson based on students' learning. She remains unsure if it was the right choice for Chase and Sheila to use her lesson plan, although the principal, Faith, assured Kaitlyn it was perfectly acceptable. Kaitlyn wants Chase to understand that lessons are guides and that their effectiveness will vary from classroom to classroom.

*Chase starts: Good morning, boys and girls. Today we are going to learn about the concept of compare and contrast. To compare and contrast means to find the similarities and differences between two or more objects or topics. Here's an example. He asks two boys to stand in the front of the room. When things are similar, or alike, you are looking at how they are same. For example, Nicholas and Ian are similar because they are boys. Nicholas and Ian are similar, or alike, because they have brown hair. Nicholas and Ian are similar, or the same, because they are in the fifth grade. Now I want you turn to your neighbor and give one example, different from the ones I mentioned, of how Nicholas and Ian are similar.*

The class fills with student chatter. Kaitlyn writes down how Chase provided an explicit explanation about the concept of similarity and then used a familiar example that students can easily connect to.

About 30 seconds later, Chase shouts, *Stop!* Then he says, *When I call your group, tell me an example. As students respond, Chase writes down their responses.*

- They both have eyes.
- Nicholas and Ian are both wearing a black shirt.
- They are both wearing sneakers.

*Chase responds, Great. Now I want you to read this sentence frame: Nicholas and Ian are similar because \_\_\_\_\_.* *This time, I want you to complete the sentence frame using the answers that I wrote on the chart paper. For example, Nicholas and Ian are similar because they both have eyes. Nicholas and Ian are similar because they are both wearing a black shirt.*

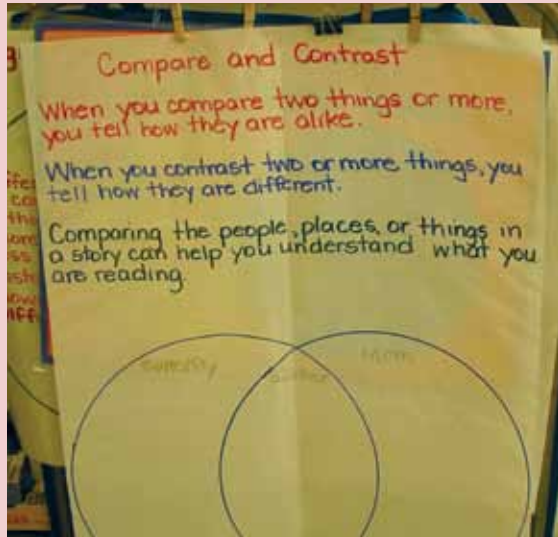
*Okay, turn to your neighbor and complete the sentence frame.*

Again, chatter fills the room. Kaitlyn listens in and students are trying out the frames. Kaitlyn writes down some notes:

- Explicit at showing how to use sentence frames to compare information
- Accountable student talk

After about 30 seconds, Chase stops the task and then asks students to share their examples. Chase continues the same process when he describes how to find differences. From Kaitlyn's observation, Chase is very explicit with explaining the concept of compare and contrast. She wonders how Chase will transition from the oral examples to using text.

Chase then explains, *I'm going to give you a short paragraph about moths and butterflies. This time, we're going to read the text and find out how moths and butterflies are similar and how they are different.* He gives students time to read the text.



Kaitlyn is surprised. Chase didn't mention that he would use an example text, and she forgot to ask. She makes a mental note for the future to ask teachers what text they plan to use during the modeling. In fact, Kaitlyn realizes their preconference was rather short because she made assumptions that Chase would be implementing her lesson exactly. She makes another mental note: *Ask questions and don't make assumptions.*

When students are done reading, Chase explains that he will ask about the similarities and differences between moths and butterflies. He shows the students a Venn diagram and explains that if the information is similar, he'll write it down in the middle section. If the information is different, he'll write it on the butterfly side or on the moth side. Chase writes down their responses as students share with the class.

After the students are done sharing, Chase repeats the directions on how to use the sentence frame. This time, he gives students a sentence frame using signal words different from their first practice. The word *alike* is used in the similar frame (*Moths and butterflies are alike because \_\_\_\_\_*). The word *whereas* is used in the differences

frame (*Moths are \_\_\_\_\_ , whereas butterflies are \_\_\_\_\_* ).

Kaitlyn notices Chase is systematic and explicit in his teaching. But she is unsure where Chase is going with this lesson. He didn't share that he planned to introduce graphic organizers to his students, nor was this in her lesson plan. His modeling and scaffolding is effective, but Kaitlyn wonders when the students will read the assigned text. She also didn't ask about the graphic organizer and realized she made another assumption. She is seeing Chase adapting her lesson plan, and she is happy that he is doing so. After all, this is what she had hoped he would do. Kaitlyn realizes how important the preconference is for helping the observer understand what the teacher plans to do and why.



## **How This Classroom Observation Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Effective Professional Development**

- The lesson focuses on content.
- The lesson is based on collaboration that occurred in the preconference.
- There is no expectation that Chase will be perfect or that the observation will be used for evaluative purposes.
- A preconference is critical to understanding what the teacher plans to do and why.
- An explicit definition of the concept, supported by a familiar topic as an example, is effective when teaching compare and contrast.
- Using sentence frames and signal words are appropriate scaffolds to help teach compare and contrast.
- It is important to adapt lessons to fit students' needs.
- Students need to spend time reading the text.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. If you and your colleagues decide to establish classroom observations as an authentic form of professional development, what conditions must be in place before you start?
2. As a classroom teacher, what would be the challenges from having a literacy coach or peer observe your lesson? How would you benefit from having another person observe your lesson?
3. As an administrator or literacy coach, how would you encourage and/or support the use of classroom observations as an authentic professional development method versus an evaluative method?

### Part 3: The Postconference

After a classroom observation, the teacher and the observer engage in a postconference, or a debriefing, about the lesson (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007; Stover et al., 2011). (See Appendix F for a suggested Postconference Form.) A postconference allows the teacher to reflect on the experience and to voice how he or she may want to adapt in the future based on what was learned from the lesson (Duffy & Kear, 2007; Stover et al., 2011). The observer will see many things during the lesson, and asking the teacher to clarify certain events will provide insight as to why things happened. However, an effective observer picks and chooses what to discuss. He or she must be skillful in asking questions without appearing to be interrogative. This helps teachers identify for themselves what went well and what they need to work on (for example, *What did you notice went well and what was your evidence? What would you do differently and why?*). Using student work samples during the postconference provides concrete evidence for the points being discussed and helps anchor the conversation (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).



Although the goal is for teachers to reflect on their practices, it is also appropriate for literacy coaches to provide teachers with explicit help, especially when concepts are new (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). However, the observer should not overwhelm the teacher with suggestions. It is best to carefully select one or two items for the teacher to reflect upon and create a conversation around how to change practices (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). According to Joyce and Showers, teachers may need “at least 30 instances of practicing a new strategy before successfully incorporating it into their teaching practices” (as cited in Lehr and Osborn, 2005, p. 20). By the end of the postconference, teachers should have a plan of action and know what their next steps are (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

## Sheila's Postconference

Kaitlyn prepares for a postconference with Sheila, another fifth grade teacher. Kaitlyn knows Sheila is resistant. Sheila avoided a preconference and an observation. This may be a tricky conversation because the only thing Kaitlyn knows is that Sheila implemented the lesson that Kaitlyn planned. Kaitlyn hopes the postconference will help Sheila analyze and reflect upon her own teaching and help her recognize that copying a lesson plan verbatim rarely works.

Kaitlyn: *How did your lesson go, Sheila?*

Sheila: *Before we begin, can you confirm what information is shared with Faith, the principal?*

Kaitlyn: *Well, I share with Faith the different activities that I participate in with the fifth grade teachers. Why?*

Sheila: *Do you make evaluative comments about us to her? Because you're not supposed to. And it's not right that she takes your comments and forms a judgment about me when she didn't observe me. Technically, she is supposed to inform me in advance when she is planning to observe me.*

Kaitlyn: *Well, it's obvious that you don't want me to share anything with Faith. So I'll tell you what. I'll just tell Faith that we had a postconference and that if she needs additional information she should come and speak with you. Are you okay with this?*

Sheila: *Not really.*

Kaitlyn: *Okay, well, obviously you are uncomfortable about the postconference. How about this? Let's just look at the student samples and then you tell me about them. This way, we'll focus on student learning.*

Sheila: *Okay.*

She takes one student sample and explains, *This student really grasped the concept of using signal words. In your lesson, I remembered students used more than one signal word, so I created a fill-in-the-blank worksheet where students could use only one word. This student filled in all of the blanks correctly.*

Kaitlyn: *I never thought of completing a fill-in-the-blank worksheet to prevent students from using more than one signal word. Did you correct all of their work?*

Sheila: *Yes. Why?*

Kaitlyn: *Well, we can sort the students' work into three different groups—one group who fully understands how use to signal words, another group who has some challenges, and the last group who has little to no understanding.*

Kaitlyn and Sheila sort the students' work into three piles. Four students completely understand the concept of signal words, 18 students have some understanding of the concept, and six students demonstrate little to no understanding of the concept.

Kaitlyn: *Now let's look at the group who had some challenges and see if we can figure out what those challenges are.*

Sheila shifts through the pile and then creates two separate groups, saying, *I noticed that students in this group are mixed up at times about when they should use signal words for things that are similar and when to use signal words for differences. For example, to complete the statement \_\_\_\_\_ whales and dolphins have fins, one student chose the word however, and another student chose similar.*

Kaitlyn: *I notice something else. All the sentences that were marked incorrect have a blank at the beginning of the sentence.*

Sheila: *Really? Let me take a look. I never noticed that while I was correcting their papers. Maybe I need to teach students how to select signal words when they are used as the first word in the sentence.*

Kaitlyn: *That's a good follow-up lesson. What did you notice about that second pile you created?*

Sheila: *This is interesting. Students in this group used signal words that demonstrated their understanding of compare and contrast, but they selected words that were not grammatically correct. For example, Whales eat plankton difference dolphins eat fish. Another one is Alike whales and dolphins have a blowhole on top of their head. Maybe for this group, I can have them write the signal words on Post-its so they can switch the words around if it doesn't make sense.*

Kaitlyn: *Using Post-its is a great idea! It gives students the flexibility to try out different signal words. Plus, it allows students to write the words once versus spending time writing and erasing. What about the last pile?*

Sheila: *Well, there were only six students in that pile, and it was hard for me to figure out because they got everything wrong.*

Kaitlyn: *Well, isn't that a pattern in itself?*

Sheila: *Oh, yeah, that is. I guess it's plain and simple that this group did not get it at all. I made assumptions that they knew how signal words help identify similarities and differences. But maybe they didn't even understand the text.*

Kaitlyn: *That's a good point. If these students didn't understand the text to begin with, obviously using signal words is going to be a challenge.*

Sheila: *Thanks, Kaitlyn, for helping me analyze the students' work. It was extremely helpful to talk with someone about the students' learning. Now I have some ideas about what I can do to help students use signal words. Maybe you can help me analyze student work after that lesson.*

Kaitlyn: *Sure. You may want to think about doing the follow-up lesson sometime this week to continue this momentum and while the learning is still fresh in their minds.*

Sheila: *I was thinking of using some of the students' work from this lesson as the introduction. You know, similar to your lesson when you had the whole group correct the sentences.*

Kaitlyn: *That's a great idea. Showing students' work is an authentic way for students to see what their peers are thinking and doing. Maybe in this lesson, you can select a handful of signal words, maybe four for similarities and four for differences, rather than giving students an entire list. This will eliminate some of the confusion.*

Sheila: *That's another great suggestion. I'll do the lesson and let you know when we can meet and review the student samples.*

## **How This Postconference Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Successful Professional Development**

- Care is taken to build a trusting relationship that is free of evaluation concerns.
- There is no expectation that teacher change will come as the result of a “quick fix.”
- Assessment of student learning is a focus.
- Kaitlyn assesses Sheila’s current status and works with her at her ability level.

### **In the Postconference, Kaitlyn and Sheila Learn the Following:**

- Some teachers may question literacy coaches (or resource teachers) regarding what information is shared with their administrators.
- Even those who resist can learn from their experience. In this example, Kaitlyn adjusted the conversation to an area the teacher was willing to discuss. The teacher was then able to benefit from the conversation and gain new information.
- It takes time to nurture and establish a trusting and collegial relationship.
- Some teachers, especially resistant ones, are more comfortable with the focus of observation and analysis being on students, not on them.
- Using student samples provides concrete evidence about what the students have learned and can help teachers plan for next steps.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. If you and your colleagues decide to engage in postconference dialogue, what conditions must be in place before you start?
2. How would you benefit from participating in a postconference with a literacy coach? What challenges would you encounter and how would you resolve them?
3. Do you feel that it is necessary to have a preconference, a classroom observation, and a postconference to become a reflective practitioner? Why or why not?
4. If you are a literacy coach, how do you establish collegial relationships with teachers so they view your role as supportive versus evaluative?
5. As a literacy coach, in what ways can you support teachers who are known to be resistant to change?
6. As a principal, how do you encourage and empower all teachers to grow professionally, including those who are resistant to change?

## Structured Learning Teams

Structured Learning Teams (SLTs) form a type of professional learning community. The terms *structured* and *learning* indicate that teachers design a structure on how they will learn and grow professionally.

SLTs are groups of teachers who have ongoing discussions about a specific topic (or topics) in order to gain new professional knowledge (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). Ideally, a single SLT should be composed of at least three but no more than seven teachers. In groups of this size, all members can feel comfortable contributing to the discussion (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001). SLTs are effective because they are nonthreatening, and they help teachers refine their existing knowledge and change their practices (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). They are productive when participants are committed to sharing and exchanging ideas and putting them into practice (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

Topics should be centered on what is happening in the classroom, or on what Duffy and Kear (2007) call “case-based” or “problem-based” situations. Such situations tend to promote the most discussion and to be of strongest interest. Collegial exchanges about such problems help teachers learn ways to improve themselves and their teaching (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Moran, 2007; Wei et al., 2009).

Initially, teachers may feel awkward about sharing with one another. Establishing learning expectations and creating goals for the group and abiding by them can eliminate some of that discomfort (see Appendix G for a sample form for establishing expectations).

During the course of the SLT, teachers often become able to make decisions as to what they would like to work on or learn more about. They frequently create binders where agendas and meeting notes can be recorded and use them so that they arrive at the next meeting ready to share information (Strickland, 2002).



## Structured Learning Teams

Each Wednesday, teachers are given 1 hour for grade-level meetings. Faith calls these meetings Structured Learning Team (SLT) meetings. Though SLTs could also be called professional learning communities (PLCs), she uses the words *structured* and *learning* so teachers are aware that the purpose is to *learn together*.

The fifth grade teachers agree to spend the hour sharing their experiences and student samples from their compare and contrast lesson. This agenda is based on their action plan from the workshop. Kaitlyn is present to guide and help the teachers remain focused on the implementation of compare and contrast.

*Kaitlyn: Thanks for coming on time. We have an hour to share our lessons. Maybe we can begin with each person sharing a brief overview of his or her lesson, then look at student examples as evidence to discuss successes and challenges, and finally, identify the next steps for your teaching and your students' learning. And whatever we share remains within this group. If you feel like sharing with our other colleagues or with Faith, then I'll let you make that decision.*

Of course, Melissa volunteers first.

*Melissa: My students needed help identifying the text pattern of compare and contrast in text. I used a text comparing blue whales and humpback whales. I had them highlight the text in three different colors. They used red to highlight information about the humpback whale, blue to highlight the information about the blue whale, and green to highlight the information about both mammals. When Kaitlyn and I had our preconference, we highlighted the text and could see issues the students might encounter. One of the issues was, if the sentence was an introduction or a transition, students would probably highlight it. For example, we anticipated that the students would highlight the sentence Blue whales and humpback whales have many differences.*

*Sheila: Why would they highlight this sentence?*

*Melissa: They would highlight it because it had the signal word differences. This is where we came up with the idea of using a green crayon and creating a sample text for students to learn this concept. I had the students find the text pattern of compare and contrast by identifying what was similar and different between riding a scooter and riding a bike. This was probably the most important step because I didn't realize that students might not know how to pick out the key information. For example, students could easily find the difference in the sentence, Blue whales have a life expectancy of 35 to 40 years,*



whereas the humpback whales' life expectancy is 45 to 50 years.

*However, if information pointing out their differences were written in two different sentences, they really needed to figure out why these were differences. For example, students had difficulty finding the differences in the sentence Blue whales can grow to almost 100 feet long and weigh up to 200 tons. Humpback whales can grow to about 52 feet long and weigh up to 40 tons.*

*I would still like to work on finding key information by highlighting. Next time, I will look for a compare and contrast text without signal words or with fewer signal words. I want students to be less reliant on using the signal words to*



*compare information. I thought the planning of the lesson and modeling of the text at the beginning were the most successful. I know it's important to model, but I realized during the planning that I was teaching students more than signal words. They were learning the content, they were learning how to use the signal words to compare information, and they were learning how to compare information without any signal words.*

*Kaitlyn, even though I was completely overwhelmed in the preconference, I think it was really powerful and it helped avoid some major pitfalls. I don't think my lesson was perfect, but I now realize that if I slow down and start with a good plan, my lessons will have better results.*

**Kaitlyn:** *I also learned that highlighting text gives an important visual clue, and it forces students to continually engage with the text. It makes them slow down and process the information.*

**Sheila:** *That sounds like an idea that I would like to try. In my lesson, I had similar challenges with signal words. One group of students had difficulty with signal words if they were in the beginning of the sentence. Another group chose signal words that were grammatically incorrect. Then the third group did not understand the concept at all.*

*During my postconference with Kaitlyn, we came up with the idea to focus on a handful of signal words. So in my next lesson, I had students write one signal word on a Post-it. In all, they had eight signal words to work with.*

*This lesson turned out much better. Putting the words on Post-its gave students the flexibility to switch to another one if it didn't sound right. They also learned that some words need to be changed when they're used at the beginning of the sentence; for example, similar needs to be changed to similarly.*

**Chase:** *Really? Students figured out how to change the word from an adjective to an adverb?*

**Sheila:** *Well, they didn't SAY that they should turn adjectives into adverbs. What they said was that the word similar sounds funny in the beginning. We used the Post-its and changed the beginning word to the other signal words for similar. Then all of a sudden, one student blurted out, "Can we say similarly and add ly at the end?" We then had a short discussion about how ly changes descriptive words to adverbs. I was shocked. Now I notice students looking for words that they can add ly to.*

*Even though Kaitlyn didn't observe my lesson, I appreciated the opportunity to be able to have a postconference and review student work. It helped guide my next lesson. I'm still uncomfortable with being observed, but I would like to continue to have postconferences.*

**Kaitlyn:** *Of course. You know, all of our comfort levels are different. I think the one message that Faith keeps repeating is to honor where people are with their knowledge and understand how people learn best. So what is your next step, Sheila?*

**Sheila:** *Well, I would like to try what Melissa did. And this time, I would like to see if students can create their own compare and contrast statements without my designing a worksheet.*

**Kaitlyn:** *Having students create their own sentences will definitely give you evidence of their learning the content and the concepts of compare and contrast using signal words.*

**Joshua:** *I'm like Sheila—Kaitlyn didn't observe me. I was overwhelmed by Kaitlyn's first lesson demonstration. So she kindly agreed to provide another lesson demonstration. I felt if I saw one more lesson, I would have a better understanding of how to teach text structure. In that demonstration, Kaitlyn continued teaching signal words. She gave students a sentence frame to prevent them from using more than one signal word.*

**Joshua:** *It was amazing. Using the frames helped students use only one signal word and learn the content more deeply.*

He shows them a student example.

Sentence Frame	Whales and dolphins are <b>different</b> because whales eat <u>plant</u> and dolphins eat <u>fish, squid, and other sea animals</u> .
My sentence	Whales eat sea animals <u>on the other hand</u> dolphins feed on other sea animals.

Chase: *I never thought of creating different sentence frames where some had signal words and others did not. You're right, Joshua. When you give the signal word, students learn the content more deeply because they must seek out how the topic is different or the same.*

Joshua: *Our next step is to have students organize the information using a graphic organizer. I'm feeling a little more confident with teaching text structure now, so Kaitlyn and I will co-teach the lesson.*

Chase: *Well, I guess I'm next. At first I thought it would be easy to use Kaitlyn's lesson plan. Then I remembered saying that I would use sentence frames because my students did not fully understand the concept of compare and contrast. I knew they would struggle if I gave them only the signal words. During my preconference, Kaitlyn suggested I create an anchor chart and do some examples with familiar topics. Like Melissa, I found the preconference to be really helpful. As I read the lesson plan, I realized I needed to provide many examples to help the students understand the concept. I believe I did three examples before we read the text.*

Melissa: *But giving many examples is good.*

Chase: *Oh, I agree. It just seemed like it was taking forever to get through the modeling. And now that I think about it, spending that time was worth it. By the time we finished doing all the examples, students only had 15 minutes to read the text. I needed to complete the lesson in a different period. Luckily, all that modeling and whole-group work made it a bit easier for them to use the sentence frames and signal words.*

Kaitlyn: *Is there anything you would have done differently?*

Chase: *I think I would have chunked the steps into separate lessons. For example, the first lesson would have been teaching the concept of compare and contrast using sentence frames. The next lesson, I would have continued focusing on finding similarities and differences and introduced the signal words.*

Kaitlyn: *I got the idea of using sentence frames from Chase during our debriefing.*

Kaitlyn: *Well, you all should be proud of yourselves. You agreed to and implemented a compare and contrast lesson. By listening to each other's reflections, all of you recognized things that were successful about your lessons and things that you would do differently. Most important, you saw what students learned and now have a good understanding about what they still need to learn.*

Joshua: *You know, I think meeting together and sharing is helpful. At least for me, since I'm new to teaching.*

Sheila: *I think this meeting was more helpful than last year's professional learning communities. I think having everyone agree to teach the same strategy and bring student samples gives us something to contribute during the discussion.*

Melissa: *I agree. This discussion was definitely richer than our PLCs from last year. What I liked was hearing about everyone's lesson. We all sort of did the same thing, yet it was different. I feel like I learned how to teach four more lessons.*

Chase: *So, Kaitlyn, what's next?*

Kaitlyn: *Well, earlier you shared what you planned to do next. Do you want to give that a try and share your lesson the next time we meet?*

Sheila: *That sounds good. We're only meeting for a postconference, right, Kaitlyn?*

Kaitlyn: *Yes, Sheila. Let me know when you are ready.*

Melissa: *How about we all meet next Thursday? I think that gives all of us enough time to try what we said we would do. Any objections?*

## **How This Structured Learning Team Incorporates Research Findings and Other Characteristics of Successful Professional Development**

- The discussion focuses on specific content.
- There is an expectation that growth and change occurs gradually.
- The environment is supportive and positive.
- A spirit of mutual assistance is evident.
- There is an attempt to align discussions with past professional development activities.

### **In the Structured Learning Team, the Teachers Learn the Following:**

- Reflecting on their experiences and sharing with others generates rich discussion and opportunities to exchange ideas.
- A similar lesson focus can be implemented differently.
- Focusing on one content area or one skill (in this example, reading) helps strengthen students' understanding of the topic.
- Using time efficiently and staying on task is critical during an SLT meeting.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. If you and your colleagues decided to implement a Structured Learning Team (SLT), what conditions must be in place before you start?
2. How would you and your colleagues benefit from implementing an SLT? What challenges would you encounter, and how would you resolve them?
3. How would you work with colleagues with varying levels of experience or willingness to share?
4. If you are a literacy coach, how do you support teachers who are willing to establish a SLT?
5. If you are a principal, how do you help teachers grow professionally?

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## Overview of Key Components

**A**s noted at the outset, the purpose of *Growing Professionally* is to assist principals, literacy coaches, and teachers as they implement school-level professional development activities such as local workshops, lesson demonstrations, observations, and professional learning communities. To be effective, these activities must take into account the following key components:

Professional development starts with the teacher. Teachers must have a voice, and they must share the desire to become more effective (Duffy & Kear, 2007).

Professional development must honor the level at which each teacher is. Different approaches should be used to meet different teachers' needs (Stover et al., 2011).

Professional development must be ongoing and sustained. Student achievement increases when professional development is maintained over 49 hours or more (Garet et al., 2001; Wei et al., 2009).

Effectiveness of professional development requires focused content, time and duration, coherence, collaboration, a supportive environment, and focus on student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2000; Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

Principles of adult learning and formative ways of measuring learning must also be present for professional development to be effective (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Strickland, 2002). For example, using preconference and postconference forms to document teachers' reflections and learning helps teachers see how their knowledge and practice have changed over time.

Professional development must be nonthreatening and collaborative if teachers are to remain engaged in change efforts over time (Strickland, 2002).

Activities are most effective when based within the cultural context of the school and on materials normally used at the school.

Principals and literacy coaches are key. They must encourage teacher reflection and provide continuous support as teachers strive to change (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001).

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## Conclusion

The intent of *Growing Professionally* is to provide principals, literacy coaches, and teachers with practical assistance as they work to improve teaching and learning in their individual schools. It is our hope that the examples in this booklet provide the guidance needed to accomplish this goal.



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## Appendix A: The Pacific CHILD Program

*Growing Professionally* is based on the Pacific Communities with High-performance In Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) program implemented by the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL Pacific) as part of a rigorous randomized control study in the Pacific region. Pacific CHILD is a principles-based professional development program consisting of research-based teaching and learning strategies proven to help improve students' reading comprehension using informational text.

Teachers participated in the Pacific CHILD program for 2 years. The Pacific CHILD program was designed using key attributes of effective professional development. Over the years, the REL Pacific staff has seen teachers take key ideas from the Pacific CHILD program and apply them to their own professional growth and the professional growth of their colleagues.

During the Pacific CHILD program, teachers participated in many of the professional development activities described in this booklet:

- Mini institutes were held three times a year, and teachers from various schools attended the institutes to reflect upon their learning, to learn new information, and to collaborate on how they would implement these strategies in the classrooms.
- Teachers also met biweekly in Structured Learning Teams (SLTs; also known as professional learning communities) to discuss their implementation of specific strategies. They shared new learning that took shape, identified challenges, and posed solutions. These school groups created group expectations and learning goals to ensure their meeting time was used efficiently and effectively.
- Teachers brought student samples to their SLT meetings and mini institutes. The student samples were used as the vehicle to generate discussion about teacher practices and their impact on student learning.
- Teachers engaged in lesson demonstrations, classroom observations (including preconferences and postconferences), and Structured Learning Teams, and they were exposed to literacy coaching for 2 years, with the REL Pacific staff serving as literacy coaches.
- Teachers were observed twice a month, they made decisions on what to teach, and they explained why those instructional practices were relevant and important. Two particularly important parts of the Pacific CHILD program were the annual institutes and the mini institutes (similar to district workshops). Descriptions and vignettes are provided for both below.

## District-Level Institutes

Institutes are longer sessions of uninterrupted time for professional development. Duration varies from 1 to 4 weeks, sometimes maybe more (Garet et al., 2001). Since institutes span over a longer duration, teachers have an increased amount of contact hours with peers, and the professional development sessions may become more intense (Yoon et al., 2007). This is beneficial because teachers can use the time to engage in reflective conversations centered on identifying challenges, sharing successes, and planning for implementation (Saxe, Gearhart, & Nasir, 2001). Institutes are often held during the summer when teachers are able to focus on the content at hand and are not burdened by the responsibilities of teaching.

Though institutes can offer an increased amount of time for teachers to grow professionally, they do come with challenges. The first challenge involves resources. Resources are needed to pay for facilities, teacher incentives, supplies and materials, consultants (as needed), and, if students are involved, incentives for them to attend the institute for the entire duration. Second, selecting dates that can accommodate everyone's schedule can be difficult. As mentioned earlier, most institutes are held during the summer. These dates may conflict with vacation schedules and obligations. Since most teachers do not get paid during the summer, providing teacher incentives is a good way to encourage their participation. Third, planning for institutes can be overwhelming. It requires coordination, patience, and flexibility, on top of determining how to incorporate other effective attributes of professional development (for example, subject matter, active involvement, coherence).

In the Pacific CHILD program, teachers participated in 2-week institutes each summer. During the 1st week, teachers learned specific reading and instructional strategies through hands-on and interactive activities. In the 2nd week, students were invited to participate in the institute. Here, teachers applied the subject matter by observing REL staff model lessons, engaging with other teachers to plan and deliver lessons, and reflecting and analyzing their learning as well as the students' learning. By the end of the 2nd week, teachers had developed action plans citing what they would like to learn more about and how they would implement their learning during the school year. For their participation, teachers earned professional learning credits toward their teacher recertification process.



## Institutes

Faith telephones Andy, the principal who spoke at the district meeting. *So how did you get all the teachers on board with the professional development program?* asks Faith.

Andy: *Well, it wasn't easy, and let me tell you, not everyone jumped on board in the beginning. But I do think that our summer institute was the driving factor.*

Faith: *What's the summer institutes and why the institute?*

Andy: *At the time, a new teacher at my school talked about how happy she was because she finally had a free summer. So I asked her to elaborate. She explained that each summer at her old school, they would have these summer institutes for 2 weeks. She elaborated that institutes are more intense and occur for a longer period of time, unlike the one-shot-deal workshop. In the first week, teachers learned the content foci on their school improvement plan, for example, differentiated instruction or vocabulary. An external contractor and the school's literacy coach would plan and facilitate the session. Then in the 2nd week, students were invited to participate in the institute. During this week, teachers would observe the facilitators modeling lessons on the content foci from the previous week. Teachers also had the opportunity to plan with colleagues and implement lessons with the students. A debriefing was held after each activity so teachers could reflect upon their learning, hear from their colleagues about what they learned, and gather ideas and strategies they could use in the classroom. So at the end of the first quarter, this teacher said she missed having the institute. She said that the institutes helped focus her instruction for the year. In addition, the literacy coach provided monthly in-class support. She missed that collegial environment. Then—and this will be shocking—she asked if we had professional development money to host an institute in the summer. I was a bit taken aback because it made me realize that the professional development at my school wasn't providing the right support for teachers. So I did what you're doing now. I called her old principal and asked about it.*

Faith: *And all of your teachers just jumped on board?*

Andy: *Oh, no. In fact, when I first bought up the idea, there were only five teachers who were interested. My literacy coach helped write a course so that teachers could opt to receive professional development credit from the state office. Then I announced that participating teachers would receive a stipend, but only three more teachers jumped on board. In some way, that was a good thing because I didn't have enough funds if all the teachers agreed to*

*participate and wanted a stipend. So I hired a consultant, and the literacy coach helped facilitate the 2-week session.*

**Faith:** *So how did you manage to get buy-in from everyone?*

**Andy:** *Well, after that summer, those eight teachers formed a tight-knit group. They wanted to learn and grow more, so they met on their own and discussed what they were doing in the classroom. At times, they asked if the literacy coach could model a lesson for them or if she could observe them teaching. They really were pioneers and instrumental in improving the professional development environment here. Then other teachers in their grade level asked what they were learning and teaching. I observed that some teachers who didn't participate in the institute were motivated to learn. I began looking at ways to extend this professional development program. I needed to find ideas to sustain the teachers' learning beyond the institute. So I had my literacy coach provide lesson demonstrations for the eager ones, and she hosted voluntary professional development learning community meetings. By the following summer, those eight teachers plus another 10 participated in the summer institute. I still hired an external consultant to facilitate the session. I also had two other teachers and the literacy coach to co-facilitate the session. I knew I had to build the capacity of my teachers so they would become future facilitators. If teacher participation were increasing at this rate, I wouldn't know how to fund these institutes, despite the fact that this was a worthy investment. From then on, if a teacher had not attended an institute, they were seen as not buying in to the program. I made it clear to teachers that the institutes were completely voluntary. And I do have three teachers who never participated in the institute for personal reasons. But they asked to receive the training materials, and they do participate in the other professional development activities during the school year.*

**Faith:** *Well, that is amazing. So what do you suggest for someone like me who does not have a budget for a 1-week or 2-week institute?*

**Andy:** *After our 3rd year, I couldn't afford for the entire staff to attend a 2-week institute, so the summer institutes were offered only to those who were new to the school or to a grade level. For the others, we did mini institutes throughout the year. If money is available, I recommend including a summer institute and having a mini institute. But if money is short, focusing on just having mini institutes is a good alternative. Mini institutes are similar to summer institutes except they're shorter. In this case, the mini institutes were 3 days, held at three different*



times over the year. The first day is a full-day session, usually held on a designated staff development day. Then the literacy team provides lesson demonstrations in classrooms based on the foci for that term. On the 3rd day, teachers implement a lesson while a member of the literacy team observes. After each activity, teachers are given time to analyze and reflect upon the learning. They end the mini institute with a professional learning community meeting during which each grade level creates implementation plans for the entire term. So if I were you, I would do mini institutes—one in the beginning of the year, another at the start of the second quarter, and the last one at the start of the third quarter. Our 1st day of the institute is usually held on a Saturday or on one of our designated professional development days. If you choose a Saturday, keep in mind that you will need some sort of incentive to get teachers to attend on their day off.

Faith: *Thanks, Andy. Mini institutes throughout the year sounds like a good plan. I do have a good start. The teachers have shared which topics they would like to learn more about, so now I need to find someone who is effective in delivering this information. I like the idea of having the literacy coach training alongside this person, so I may ask my literacy coach to do the same. Thank you again for being so generous with your sharing. Do you have any other advice?*

Andy: *Two things: First, continue creating professional development opportunities at the school instead of sending your teachers off campus. They'll start to view the school differently. They begin to see that professional learning happens at the school, with their colleagues, in their classroom, and with their students. Second, don't worry if all your teachers are not on board initially. You just need the right ones who will spread the message of growing professionally.*

Faith: *Like a wildfire?*

Andy laughs: *Exactly!*



## **In the Conversation About Institutes, the Principals Learn the Following:**

- Institutes provide uninterrupted time for teachers to focus on learning.
- They can set the tone for professional growth among teachers.
- They require an extensive amount of resources, including time, money, and materials.
- Allowing school staff to help plan and deliver institutes will help sustain efforts.

## **Reflective Questions**

1. If you are a classroom teacher, how would you benefit from participating in an institute?
2. If you are a literacy coach or administrator, how would you incorporate institutes as part of the professional development program in the school? What would be the benefits of implementing lesson demonstrations? What challenges would you encounter, and how would you resolve them?
3. If your school decides to implement institutes, what conditions must be in place before you start?



## Mini Institutes

In the Pacific CHILD study, the REL Pacific team conducted 3-day workshops called mini institutes. The mini institutes are similar to district-level workshops where teachers from different schools participated in the session. The mini institutes focused on a few topics (for example, compare and contrast, differentiated instruction) and teachers were expected to apply their learning with their students.

The 1st-day session was a full day (usually held on a Saturday) during which teachers deepened and extended their knowledge on specific topics for that quarter. On the 2nd and 3rd days, REL Pacific staff worked with teachers in their classrooms. REL Pacific staff modeled lessons while classroom teachers observed and debriefed. Then classroom teachers planned and taught a lesson using the content from the 1st day of the institute while the REL Pacific staff observed. The classroom observation also included a preconference and postconference with REL Pacific staff. The end of the mini institute concluded with a Structured Learning Team meeting where everyone was able to synthesize their learning and share their implementation plans about the newly learned topics.

Over the course of a school year, REL Pacific staff facilitated three mini institutes to support teachers with ongoing and sustained professional development on their reading instructional practices.

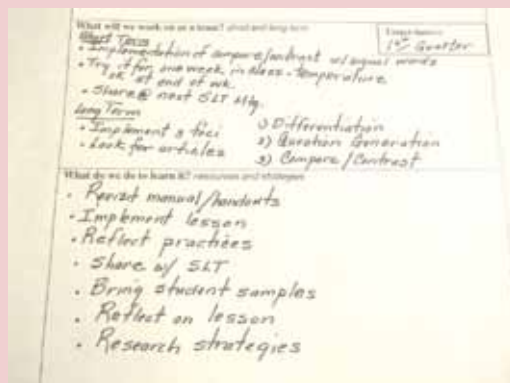
Though mini institutes are not workshops per se, this example illustrates how a full-day session followed by in-class support on subsequent days could serve as a model for how to extend learning beyond the traditional 1-day workshop.

## Mini Institutes

Luckily for Faith, she was able to secure an external consultant who is knowledgeable and skilled in the areas of informational text, text structure, vocabulary, and differentiated instruction. With input from the staff, the external consultant will provide one full-day workshop and three half-day workshops for the entire staff. The format of each session will highlight the research around each of the selected topics, followed by collaborative activities for the teachers to engage in and solidify their learning. The staff agreed that informational texts will be the vehicle to support the strategies of text structure, vocabulary, and differentiated instruction. The session will also include discussions about what these strategies might look like in the classroom and time for grade levels to meet and plan how to implement them. Toward the end of the session, the teachers meet to complete an action plan. The action plan serves as a reminder of what teachers say they plan to do with their learning (see figure below).

At the end of the workshop, Faith shares that by the next workshop, teachers are expected to do the following:

- Implement one or more of the strategies with students.
- Share and analyze their student samples at the next grade-level meeting and reflect upon their learning.
- Select a few student samples to share with the entire school at the next workshop.



### **In the Workshop, Teachers Learn the Following:**

- They learn how to set goals to extend learning beyond the full-day session.
- Focusing on a few topics makes learning more manageable.
- A shared learning experience promotes collegiality and reflective discussion.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. If you are a classroom teacher, how would you benefit from participating in a workshop?
2. If you are a literacy coach, how would you extend learning from the workshop?
3. If your school has conducted workshops, what have been the successes and challenges?



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## Appendix B: Professional Development Research

Professional development is an important component in helping people grow professionally regardless of their career. In any profession, ongoing learning and improvement is vital for an organization's success.

In education, professional development programs offer teachers opportunities to learn new information, refine and change their thinking on existing knowledge, and change their instruction in the classroom using evidence-based best practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Duffy, 2004; Duffy & Kear, 2007; Guskey, 2000; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Strickland, 2002). As Duffy and Kear (2007) clearly state, "The goal of professional development is to help teachers be more effective" (p. 580). In-service education, or professional development programs for teachers after certification, is the only opportunity for most teachers to expand their knowledge (Lehr & Osborn, 2005).

Professional development programs are often shaped by people outside the school who do not have a firsthand account of the daily realities of the school environment. And although their intention is to help teachers, they may not realize the minimal impact they have when their efforts do not take into account the interests and needs of the particular school and its teachers. Local schools need a tailored approach based on what the teachers know (or don't know) and what they want to know more about. According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), effective professional development must be "high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom" (Section 9101).

As Easton (2008) asserts, "Professional learning starts at the bottom, within schools, with educators identifying what students need and so what they themselves need to learn" (p. 756). Hence, *Growing Professionally* focuses primarily on school-level professional development activities.

The most critical factor in a professional development program is the teacher. The National Reading Panel reports that it is "the predisposition of teachers to change that makes change possible. Without a change in attitude, it is extremely difficult to effect changes in practices" (National Institute of Child Health and Human

Development [NICHD], 2000, p. 5–14). For meaningful change to occur, teachers must have a voice in the process of their own learning.

The need for professional development is much more critical than it has been in the past. Some schools are seeing an increase in diversity. As student populations change, teachers need opportunities to learn effective and developmentally appropriate practices on how to teach diverse learners. In the 2011 Hawai‘i State Assessment, only 40% of English language learners met reading proficiency (Hawai‘i Department of Education, 2011).

Professional development is also more important than ever because of the startling finding that about 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years, reporting that they do not have strong mentoring support (Lehr & Osborn, 2005; Wei et al., 2009). This means that principals who invest resources in beginning teachers often see those investments disappear in a few short years. However, when schools design professional development programs to support beginning teachers, most beginning teachers remain in the profession (Wei et al., 2009).

Because of such findings, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) (NCLB)* and state educational agencies have developed strict student achievement accountability plans. When students do not meet academic achievement standards, more attention is now focused on quality of teaching, and teachers have become part of the accountability process when students don’t make academic progress. Additionally, the NCLB has defined what a highly qualified teacher is and requires schools to spend at least 10 percent of their funds on professional development efforts to ensure that a highly qualified teacher is in every classroom (Wei et al., 2009).



Though the definition of “highly qualified” is based purely on a teacher’s ability to obtain certification and license, teachers need to continually learn as new information emerges. For example, as a result of the standards-based reform movement, there has been an increase in professional development studies (Yoon et al., 2007). Teachers need access to this information so they enhance their knowledge and change practices as new information continues to emerge.

In addition, teachers need time to develop in-depth understanding about the subject matter. Teachers who participated in an average of 49 hours of professional development saw student achievement increase as much as 21 percentage points (Yoon et al., 2007). In studies that showed teacher outcomes improvement, student achievement increased (NICHD, 2000).

Having time to plan effective lessons with colleagues is another reason for more professional development. Wei and colleagues (2009) found that teachers in the United States spend 3 to 5 hours planning, often *independently*, versus teachers in some European countries, who spend about 15 hours a week planning *collaboratively* with colleagues.

Designing an effective professional development program requires intentional and purposeful planning (Guskey, 2000). Professional development that went directly to teachers versus a train-the-trainer model was more effective (Yoon et al., 2007). A train-the-trainer model is when a professional developer works with a group of trainers who then train the teachers, rather than the professional developer working directly with the teachers.

As highlighted in this booklet, effective professional development programs have key attributes that are essential to effectiveness: a focus on content, time, and duration; coherence; collaboration; a supportive environment; and a focus on student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Duffy & Kear, 2007; Echevarria et al., 2008; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2000; Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).



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## Appendix C: The Role Played by Professional Standards

The standards movement began as a way to improve education. Professional development standards were designed to improve the quality of teaching (Strickland, 2002). This was one way for teachers and professional development efforts to link with student standards (Strickland, 2002). For example, there are professional standards that are designed to accomplish the following:

- Improve the teaching of content (for example, *Standards for Reading Professionals*, by the International Reading Association and *Standards for Science Teaching*, by the National Research Council and the National Science Teachers Association)
- Design and evaluate professional development (for example, *Standards for Professional Learning*, by Learning Forward and *Standards for the Professional Development of Teachers of Mathematics*, by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics)
- Qualify a teacher for attainment of a certification or a license to determine the quality of a teacher (for example, Hawai‘i Teachers Standards and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)
- Determine the quality of a program through accreditation (for example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education)



Why are standards important in a professional development program? Standards serve as a guideline to help teachers understand the critical information about a subject area. Teachers can then apply this knowledge in the classroom. Professional developers can use the standards to design and deliver content. For example, in the *Standards for Reading Professionals* by the International Reading Association (2010), standard 5.4 states: “Use a variety of classroom configurations (i.e., whole class, small group, and individual) to differentiate instruction. Professional developers can simulate what this standard may look like in practice by having teachers learn the content by working in whole groups, small groups, and independently.”

When professional developers have a comprehensive understanding about adult learners, they design professional development around key principles using methodologies on teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001; Rueda, 1998). For example, in

the Pacific CHILD program, REL Pacific staff followed six key principles to ensure learning was maximized for all participants (Padua & Hanson, 2008; PREL, 2007; Rueda, 1998).

Often, professional development is viewed as activities. Activities are important, but they serve mainly as the vehicle for how the content will be delivered. The success of the activities depends on whether teachers buy in to the effort and whether the activities are guided by principles of adult learning, findings from professional development research, and learning outcomes. Most importantly, success depends on whether teachers improve their practice as a result.

There is no single method that will meet all teachers' needs. As mentioned earlier, teachers come from diverse backgrounds and have varying levels of experience and knowledge. Teachers need to engage in various activities individually, in pairs, or in small groups so they can learn from and with others.

Most studies on professional development agree that activities that are job-embedded, part of the school day, and emphasize teacher ownership in the process are the most effective (Easton, 2008; Garet et al., 2001; Saxe et al., 2001; Wei et al., 2009).

Professional development programs are not cheap. Easton (2008) reports the highest cost should be the amount needed to secure release time for teachers to collaborate. They also are messy to plan (Easton, 2008). But the effort is essential if we are to achieve the goals of professional standards.

# Appendix D: Lesson Demonstration Form

Lesson Demonstration Form	
Check box of lesson focus (✓)	<p><b>Text structure:</b> <i>Compare and contrast; cause and effect</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend to signal words</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Focus attention on text structure, text pattern, and/or text features</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of visual representation</p> <p><i>Text features</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend to physical features of the text</p>
	<p><b>Vocabulary:</b> <i>Word knowledge and parts</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explicit teaching of key vocabulary → student-friendly definitions, context, multiple exposures, active involvement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of word-learning strategies (e.g., dictionary, word parts, context clues)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of rich and varied language to foster word consciousness</p>
	<p><b>Differentiated instruction:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teach-learn cycle</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Integration of language and content</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Flexible grouping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Scaffolding</p>
Date/Time:	Write what you hope to learn from the demonstration:
Demonstration:	<p><i>Let these questions guide your observation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the teacher want the students to understand?</li> <li>• How does the teacher provide explicit instruction?</li> <li>• What did the teacher do when he or she modeled the concept?</li> <li>• What does the teacher do to get 100% student engagement with the content/activity?</li> <li>• How does the teacher manage the classroom?</li> <li>• How is the classroom organized?</li> <li>• How does the teacher integrate the reading strategies and instructional strategies?</li> </ul> <p><i>Reflect upon what you have observed and then let these questions guide you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you learn from the lesson that can be used in your own classroom?</li> <li>• Did you notice anything surprising or anything that confirmed your understanding of effective teaching in this lesson?</li> <li>• What would you do differently?</li> <li>• As a result of the observation, what additional questions do you have?</li> <li>• What support would be helpful to you at this time?</li> <li>• What are your next steps?</li> </ul>

# Appendix E: Preconference Form

<b>PRECONFERENCE</b>	
Date: _____ Teacher: _____ Observer: _____	
Select at least one question (not all) from each of the categories to discuss with the teacher. Place a check mark next to each question the teacher responds to. Record comments in the next column.	
<p><b>CONTEXT</b> – to understand why the teacher is implementing the lesson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What are the objectives of the lesson? Why did you select them?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What data and evidence were used to help plan this lesson?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How many times have the students been exposed to the objectives? The materials?</p>	
<p><b>CONTENT &amp; PROCESS</b> – to understand what the teacher will implement and how he/she will do so</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What reading material/s will be used?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What explanation will be given to help students understand the objectives to be learned and why they are important?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How will the students practice the targeted objectives?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How will students know that they are meeting the objectives?</p>	
<p><b>PRODUCT</b> – to understand how the teacher will determine the effectiveness of the lesson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What data will be collected as evidence of student learning (e.g., conversation, observation, performance)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What specific feedback would you like about your students?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What specific feedback would you like about your teaching?</p>	

*Adapted from Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Costa and Garmston (1994).*

# Appendix F: Postconference Form

<b>POSTCONFERENCE</b>	
Date: _____ Teacher: _____ Observer: _____	
Select at least one question (not all) from each category to discuss with the teacher. Place a check mark next to each question asked. Record comments in the next column.	
<p><b>ANALYZING PROCESS</b> – The teacher is able to determine the effectiveness of the instructional activity (e.g., delivery, content used, appropriateness).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What are your thoughts about the lesson (successes and challenges)? What evidence do you have?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Did you adjust your instruction based upon your noticing students' behavior and/or your instructional delivery?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was the content appropriate for all of the students? What needs adjustment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explain what you would do differently.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I noticed that you _____. / Help me understand why you _____.</p>	
<p><b>DETERMINING STUDENT LEARNING</b> – The teacher is able to use evidence from the instructional activity to determine students' achievement of the objectives and improvement of their reading comprehension.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What evidence do you have that shows students learned the objectives to improve their reading comprehension?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was there any part of the instructional activity that gave them difficulty? How did you adjust your instruction to accommodate this challenge?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What were you thinking about when you did _____ (specific part of the lesson) and you realized _____ (e.g., resulting student behavior, changes that needed to be made in the lesson)?</p>	
<p><b>EXTENDING SELF-LEARNING</b> – The teacher is able to determine how to improve his or her knowledge and skills about reading.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What did you learn about your own teaching from this lesson?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> What steps would you like to take to improve your understanding and teaching about _____ (reading component) and/or _____ (format of instruction)?</p>	
Comments:	

*Adapted from Lyons and Pinnell (2001) and Costa and Garmston (1994).*

# Appendix G: Structured Learning Team Expectations

## Structured Learning Team (SLT) Expectations

Teachers can use this form to set expectations about how to participate in their SLT. When disagreements arise, this document can be used to help resolve any concerns.

Topic	Concrete details of what we agree to
Being on time	
Being absent	
Being prepared: • for learning • for teaching	
Staying on task	
Using cell phones	
Being actively involved	
Applying strategies	
Communicating with peers	
Developing trust	
Handling difficulties	









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