

Observation Checklist for High-Quality Professional Development Training

The *Observation Checklist for High-Quality Professional Development*¹ was designed to be completed by an observer to determine the level of quality of professional development training. It can also be used to provide ongoing feedback and coaching to individuals who provide professional development training. Furthermore, it can be used as a guidance document when designing or revising professional development. The tool represents a compilation of research-identified indicators that should be present in high quality professional development. Professional development training with a maximum of one item missed per domain on the checklist can be considered high quality.

Context Information	
Date:	Location:
Topic:	Presenter(s):
Observer:	Role: Evaluator
The professional development provider:	
Preparation	Observed? (Check if Yes)
1. Provides a description of the training with learning objectives prior to training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Training description and objectives e-mailed to participants in advance</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Training description and goals provided on registration website</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Agenda including learning targets provided with materials via online file sharing before training</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
2. Provides readings, activities, and/or questions in accessible formats to think about prior to the training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Articles for pre-reading e-mailed to participants in advance</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Book for pre-reading distributed to schools before training</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Materials made available via online file sharing</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
3. Provides an agenda (i.e., schedule of topics to be presented and times) before or at the beginning of the training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Paper copy of agenda included in training packet for participants</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Agenda included in pre-training e-mail</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
4. Quickly establishes or builds on previously established rapport with participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer gives own background, using humor to create warm atmosphere</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer praises group's existing skills and expertise to create trust</i> 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer uses topical videos to break the ice with the audience</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
Introduction	
<p>5. Connects topic to participants' context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: The state leader introducing the presenter explains that the topic is related to the initiative being implemented across the state</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer shows examples from classrooms, then asks participants to compare the examples to what happens in their school</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer shares participating district data profiles and asks participants to consider how the intervention might affect students</i> 	Observed? (Check if Yes)
Evidence or example:	
<p>6. Includes the empirical research foundation of the content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer provides a list of references supporting evidence-based practices</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Citations to research are given during PowerPoint presentation</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer references key researchers and details their contributions to the training content during presentation</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>7. Content builds on or relates to participants' previous professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer explains how intervention relates to other existing interventions within the state</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer refers to content provided in previous trainings within the sequence</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer uses participants' knowledge of other interventions to inform training</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>8. Aligns with organizational standards or goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer shows how the intervention fits in with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer discusses how the district selected this intervention for implementation as part of an improvement plan</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer refers to the program as part of a federally-funded State Personnel Development Grant</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>9. Emphasizes impact of content (e.g., student achievement, family engagement, client outcomes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants brainstorm the ways the intervention will impact students, especially students with disabilities</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer uses data to show that the intervention is shown to positively impact post-school outcomes and inclusion in the general education classroom for students with disabilities</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer shares research that shows that the use of the instructional strategies improved academic achievement for students</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
Demonstration	
<p>10. Builds shared vocabulary required to implement and sustain the practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer has participants work together to formulate definitions of the intervention components and then goes over the definitions as a group</i> 	Observed? (Check if Yes)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer defines instructional practices according to established literature</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer introduces acronyms and mnemonics to help participants remember training content</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>11. Provides examples of the content/practice in use (e.g., case study, vignette)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer provides video examples of the intervention in place within classrooms at different grade levels</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer provides hands-on demonstrations of how to use new technology tools</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer uses a case study to demonstrate how to implement the intervention</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>12. Illustrates the applicability of the material, knowledge, or practice to the participants' context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer describes how the intervention will benefit schools/classrooms</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer shows trend data before and after the practice was implemented in a school</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer presents a case study of a teacher who has successfully implemented the intervention</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
Engagement	
	Observed? (Check if Yes)
<p>13. Includes opportunities for participants to apply content and/or practice skills during training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer has participants perform a mock lesson using the new instructional strategy</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: After receiving training on how to complete a form, participants practice completing the form with a sample case</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Participants practice identifying various instructional strategies from sample videos</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>14. Includes opportunities for participants to express personal perspectives (e.g., experiences, thoughts on concept)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants use their experiences and prior knowledge to fill in a worksheet on the advantages and disadvantages of various instructional approaches</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Participants work together to strategize ways to overcome barriers to implementation in their school</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: In groups, participants share personal and professional experiences related to the topic.</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>15. Facilitates opportunities for participants to interact with each other related to training content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants independently answer questions, then discuss those answers as a large group</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Participants work in groups to assess implementation progress in their building</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Participants think/pair/share about questions within the training</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>16. Adheres to agenda and time constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Breaks, lunch, and dismissal occur on schedule according to written or verbal agenda</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer adjusts training content to accommodate adjustments to agenda (e.g. participants arriving late due to inclement weather)</i> 	

Evidence or example:	
Evaluation/Reflection	
Observed? (Check if Yes)	
<p>17. Includes opportunities for participants to reflect on learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants strategize how to apply the knowledge from the training in their own schools</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Participants record 3 main points, 2 lingering questions, and one action they will take</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Green, yellow, and red solo cups at tables used to visually check for understanding at key points throughout training</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>18. Includes specific indicators—related to the knowledge, material, or skills provided by the training—that would indicate a successful transfer to practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants work in district-level teams to use a graphic organizer to create an action plan</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Expectations for completing classroom observations outlined for coaches</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Materials provided for educators to do mid-semester self-assessment to see if intervention is being implemented</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>19. Engages participants in assessment of their acquisition of knowledge and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Post-test to assess trainees' grasp of learning objectives</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: After guided practice on how to complete an observation form, participants use the form to individually rate a video example and compare their responses to the trainer</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Participants complete performance based assessment, illustrating that they have mastered the learning targets.</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
Mastery	
Observed? (Check if Yes)	
<p>20. Details follow-up activities that <u>require</u> participants to apply their learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Participants complete an action plan with clear activities, a timeline, and individuals responsible</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Due dates for steps of student behavioral assessment process reviewed at end of training</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Implementation timeline with due dates provided and discussed</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>21. Offers opportunities for continued learning through technical assistance and/or resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer describes future trainings and explains how training fits into the series</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer provides contact information for technical assistance including e-mail address and phone number</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Trainer shows participants where to find additional materials and readings on the project website</i> 	
Evidence or example:	
<p>22. Describes opportunities for coaching to improve fidelity of implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>EXAMPLE 1: Trainer describes follow-up in-building support to be provided by state-level coaches</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 2: Trainer provides monthly two-hour phone calls to discuss barriers and strategize solutions</i> ● <i>EXAMPLE 3: Series of coaching webinars scheduled to provide follow-up support and additional information on how to implement the intervention</i> 	
Evidence or example:	

¹ Noonan, P., Gaumer Erickson, A., Brussow, J., & Langham, A. (2015). *Observation checklist for high-quality professional development in education* [Updated version]. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning

Authors' Note:

This checklist is not designed to evaluate all components of professional development, because as Guskey (2000) points out, professional development is an intentional, ongoing, and systemic process. However, training (e.g. workshops, seminars, conferences, webinars) is the most common form of professional development because it is “the most efficient and cost-effective professional development model for sharing ideas and information with large groups” (p. 23). Therefore, this checklist is designed to improve and evaluate the quality of training.

References

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