

Let's Get CLEAR: Designing Highly Effective Professional Development that Models UDL

Kasia Derbiszewska

Professional Development (PD) often succumbs to the “sit and get” model. Because PD providers have vast amounts of information to cover in a limited amount of time, the lecture format often becomes the dominant “food group.” This leaves participants feeling malnourished and craving more interactive experiences. As a result, PD fatigue develops.

In contrast, balanced professional learning experiences provide a variety of ways for participants to activate background knowledge, consume content, see relevant examples, apply new learning, and reflect on their understanding and growth. The CLEAR mnemonic (Derbiszewska & Tucker-Smith, 2020) is a framework that offers providers a way to strategically design successful professional learning experiences. It is a way for PD providers to strategically improve adult learning by ensuring that five modes are present in all PD experiences: *Connect*, *Learn*, *Envision*, *Apply*, *Reflect*. The five modes help PD leaders plan robust, balanced professional learning experiences that set the foundation for improving instructional practice.

While there are many strategies that support the CLEAR mnemonic, below are five practical, concrete strategies that transform traditional PD into robust professional learning experiences that inspire changes in teaching practice:

1. (Connect) **Puzzle Mates:** Instead of introducing or reviewing core concepts through a passive lecture presentation, this PD strategy provides physical movement and helps participants articulate and explore core ideas. Guidelines: 7,8,9,2,3

Nicole Tucker-Smith

2. (Learn) **List Group Label:** Helps to activate PD participants' prior knowledge and deepen understanding of essential terminology related to a PD concept. This interactive strategy also helps to develop a common language and shared vocabulary. Guidelines: 8,2,3,4
3. (Example) **The Placemat:** Allows participants to explore real-world examples of what a specific PD concept looks like through photographs, samples, and artifacts. Guidelines: 7,8,9,2,3,5
4. (Apply) **The POP Challenge:** This strategy helps participants apply the target instructional practice to an existing challenge that they may be facing. It highlights the relevance of professional learning and supports planning and strategy development. Guidelines: 7,8,9,3,5,6
5. (Reflect) **Idea Incubator:** This strategy provides an opportunity for participants to consolidate what they have learned and reflect on how they will implement their new understandings into practice. Guidelines: 7,8,9,3,4,6

Takeaway: Adult learners are variable. The CLEAR mnemonic helps educators incorporate UDL guidelines and plan professional learning experiences that provide a range of options to support engagement, comprehension and develop high-impact professional development.