On Friday, March 22nd, a group of 20 teachers, literacy coaches, state and district leaders, and professional development (PD) providers came together in Tampa, FL to discuss “Building a Quality System” for LDC work. The event took place at Adams Middle School, a school in the Hillsborough County Public School district serving over 1,200 students in grades 6-8.

The working session was the first of what will be a series of conversations on establishing and maintaining a quality LDC system for teacher development, a prime area of concern to the new Literacy Design Collaborative. The session was facilitated by Chad Vignola, LDC executive director, and Lee Kappes, co-founder of Reach Associates and member of the LDC design team, and focused on addressing:

- What do LDC-qualified teachers need to know and be able to do? What PD activities and experiences would support the development of these teacher skills?
- With teacher skills and attendant activities identified, what systems, structures, and processes would an LDC PD provider have to have in place to support that teacher development?
- What evidence would we want to assess whether a teacher is able to implement LDC effectively and whether a PD provider has the capacity to support teacher LDC development?

The day-long session was highly productive, and participants’ engagement and willingness to grapple with these complex questions around quality assurance signals the importance of the answers to the future and growth of LDC. In the morning, participants helped define the skills teachers need to possess to be proficient in the LDC approach. The discussion centered around three critical categories of skills that teachers should possess: skills to develop modules, implement modules, including the ability to select appropriate texts and tasks, and finally, to reflect on module development and implementation using student work and jurying tools.

Later in the morning, after visits to LDC classrooms to ground conversations in everyday reality, participants focused on how to frame an LDC professional development quality-control system that ensures teachers are well-supported to develop and improve their skills. This discussion touched on key criteria for good PD providers, expectations for PD providers’ internal processes and training delivery systems, and potential non-negotiables of LDC training and professional learning experiences. Expertise in literacy, ability to adapt and personalize to a specific school or district, and on-the-ground LDC experience developing and overseeing the implementation of modules were some of the key criteria of effective PD providers that participants identified.

Towards the end of the day, participants focused on translating the key takeaways from the day’s earlier discussions into meaningful training processes, systems, and structures for LDC. Small groups deliberated on the evidence PD providers should look for to know that their training systems and processes are working effectively and the evidence needed to assess whether individual teachers are capable of successfully implementing LDC.

The working session at Hillsborough was the beginning of a meaningful series of conversations on maintaining a quality system for LDC. At the moment, the Literacy Design Collaborative is compiling our key takeaways from the rich discussion and is planning to share them in the coming months. We will continue to refine our findings in working groups, and we hope to be able to share a draft version at the SREB LDC/MDC conference in July.