



A PLANNING GUIDE FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS

Before You Book Another PD Day

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE INVESTING IN
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**“Start with the change you want to create, not
the workshop you want to schedule.”**

Schools invest considerable time, money, and staff energy in professional development. Yet even a well-received workshop can have little lasting effect if it is disconnected from teachers' needs, school priorities, or ongoing support. Before choosing a topic, presenter, or format, use these questions to clarify the change you want to create, and the kind of professional learning most likely to support it.

USE IT INDEPENDENTLY

Clarify your own thinking before approaching providers.

USE IT WITH YOUR TEAM

Build alignment in a leadership or improvement meeting.

USE IT WITH A PARTNER

Guide a more productive conversation with a PD provider.

QUESTIONS 1–5

Begin With the Change

The strongest professional-learning plans begin with a clearly defined instructional challenge—not a topic list.

1

What problem are we trying to solve?

Define an observable instructional or student-learning challenge.

TOO BROAD

We need PD on student engagement.

MORE ACTIONABLE

Classroom observations suggest that students have few opportunities to explain their reasoning or respond to one another's ideas.

2

What should teachers do differently afterward?

Describe a change in practice, not simply exposure to information. Complete the sentence: “**After this professional learning, teachers will be able to...**”

Is the change realistic?

Is enough time available?

What support will be needed?

3

How should this PD change students’ classroom experience?

Keep the professional learning connected to its ultimate purpose.

What will students be doing?

What will they be thinking about?

What will they have greater access to?

What evidence will show a change?

4

How does this connect with our existing priorities?

Identify the school-improvement goal it supports, current instructional expectations, curriculum or assessment work already underway, and other initiatives competing for educators’ attention.

5

What do our educators already know and do well?

Locate where the practice is already working, who holds relevant knowledge or experience, and what colleagues can learn from one another.

Professional learning should build on existing expertise and not assume that everyone starts from the same place.

QUESTIONS 6–10

Design the Learning Process

A workshop is one possible format. The goal, staff context, and follow-through should determine the design.

6 What differences exist across our staff?

Consider experience levels, grade bands, subjects, roles, confidence, proficiency, and opportunities for differentiated support.

8 What will happen after the session?

Plan time to apply learning, collaborative planning, coaching, peer observation, student-work review, PLC discussion, leadership feedback, or a scheduled follow-up.

7 What format best matches the goal?

Choose the learning structure to fit the need, not simply because it's familiar.

IF EDUCATORS NEED TO...	CONSIDER...
Develop shared knowledge	Workshop or facilitated study
See a practice in action	Modeling or demonstration
Apply a strategy	Collaborative planning
Refine implementation	Coaching and feedback
Examine impact	PLC inquiry or student-work analysis
Sustain a larger change	A sequence combining formats

If the answer is “nothing,” you may be planning an event rather than a professional-learning process.

9 How will we know whether it worked?

Look beyond satisfaction surveys and examine three levels of evidence.

Educator response

Was the experience relevant and useful?

Implementation

Did instructional practice change?

Student experience

Did students encounter something meaningfully different?

10 Have we involved educators in the decision?

Teacher input improves relevance, credibility, and implementation.

- Three-question staff survey
- PLC discussions
- Student-work review
- Focus groups
- Classroom observations
- Teacher representation

Gathering input does not mean abandoning schoolwide priorities. It means designing support that helps educators meet them.



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Turn Reflection Into a Brief

Capture the decisions that should guide your next leadership-team meeting or provider conversation.

THE CHALLENGE WE WANT TO ADDRESS

THE TEACHER PRACTICE WE WANT TO STRENGTHEN

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE WE WANT TO CREATE

WHAT EDUCATORS ALREADY KNOW AND DO WELL

DIFFERENCES IN STAFF NEEDS

CONNECTION TO CURRENT PRIORITIES

Every meaningful improvement journey begins with a thoughtful conversation.

EdClimb helps schools and districts translate instructional priorities into professional learning that is relevant, research-based, and built for implementation. From a focused workshop to coaching, curriculum design, PLC facilitation, or a broader school-improvement plan.

**START A PLANNING
CONVERSATION**

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THE MOST APPROPRIATE LEARNING FORMAT

FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

EVIDENCE WE WILL EXAMINE

EDUCATORS WHO SHOULD HELP SHAPE THE PLAN

OUR NEXT DECISION

Are you ready for your next PD day?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| ☐ Specific instructional challenge defined | ☐ Desired teacher change identified | ☐ Intended student experience described |
| ☐ Connected to an existing priority | ☐ Staff strengths understood | ☐ Format selected from the goal |
| ☐ Implementation support planned | ☐ Staff needs understood | ☐ Educators involved |
| ☐ Evidence identified | | |

7–10 points: Ready to identify the right learning partner.

4–6 points: Promising direction; several decisions remain.

0–3 points: Pause and clarify the desired change first.

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