

Top 10 essentials for professional development

What makes a PD experience worth the time, the money, the effort?

1. Modeling Best Practices

We've all sat through mediocre PD sessions: whoever is leading the session isn't modeling best education practices in the delivery. Typically this can look like a straight lecture or an overabundance of wordy PowerPoint slides (as my friend DeeDee Rasmusen says, "PowerPoint's have no power and no point"). When best teaching practices are in place—we know. The time flies by. The engagement is authentic. We leave inspired, especially when we have *experienced* best practices that we can now implement; we are ready to transform ideas into action.

2. Collegial Exchange

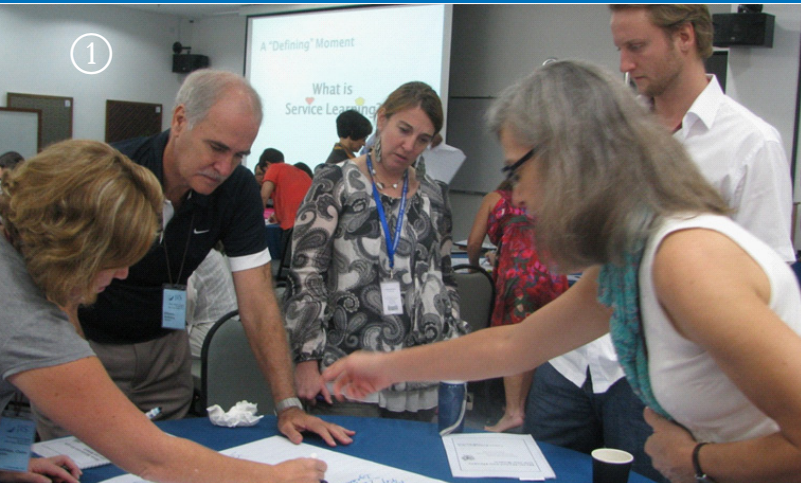
Educators need time to interact and confer with their colleagues. A PD needs to weave this in, in short and longer bursts. Whether you are with people you know or don't know walking in, knowing more about everyone is an imperative walking out. Plus there are knowledgeable people in the room. Let's consider each person as being the keeper of some wisdom that deserves to be shared.

3. Practical Ideas

Theory is great, elevating pedagogy a must. At some point however; *What does this look like in application? What do I do? How does this impact my teaching and student learning, or my administrative role?* Give practicality a boost.

- 1. Teachers gather in Jakarta, collaborate to create definitions.
- 2. American International School of Johannesburg teachers dramatise learning strategies
- 3. Guilford County School, North Carolina, teachers draw quotes

- 4. Cathryn Berger Kaye leads an interactive session on teaching strategies
 - 5. Cathryn Berger Kaye engages Los Angeles teachers in building a student leader.
- All photos except #5 courtesy of Cathryn Berger Kaye





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4. Moving from Relevant to Real

Real has much more punch. Students want to be in *real* time gaining *real* experiences. Another hypothetical simulation role play? Some are fabulous. Others? Eh. When a PD includes real world opportunities for participants (when possible) *or* provides a clear road map for bringing this to your students, that’s what we want.

5. Refreshing

Take good ideas, mix them up in a pot, add new spices, clarity, higher levels of student engagement—refreshed. However! We still need *new* ideas and ways of seeing. Let’s go for a hybrid including *refreshing* and *new*.

6. Deeper Inquiry

Questions matter. The question under that question typically matters more. And how about the question under that one? Our students often find too easy satisfaction with their first idea for a question—and sometimes as educators we can as well. An exceptional PD pushes us well past that first layer into deeper questions which lead to deeper understandings.

7. Engagement

From the beginning to the middle to closing moments, we are engaged. Not because the presenter is pulling rabbits out of a hat. No more gimmicks. We want strategies. The presenter is consistent with varied styles and modalities. We are moving. We are talking. We are drawing or sticking post-its on walls. We are challenged and we also laugh. And each element is for a purpose. Ice breakers, no. They melt. We are seeking authenticity for engagement that the method and means of engagement is the ideal fit for what we are experiencing and learning.

8. Becoming More Reflective

Becoming more reflective is quite different from *reflecting*. Reflecting is all too often a by-the-book process that teachers lead with students in ways that are quite predictable which can lead to predictable responses. In a PD, the processes call us to reflection because they are meaningful and raise thoughts with new angles and we gain perspective in a myriad of ways, anything but predictable. This *calls us* to choose to be reflective, and models what becoming reflective by *choice* could mean for our students.

9. Transparency

With purposeful experiences thoughtfully planned and led, a truly helpful PD presses the pause button often to consider: *What was this process like? What happened? What did you learn?* The modeling of transparency also reveals its importance in day-to-day classrooms and shows how this can be achieved in a variety of ways. This assists all learners and leads us to more moments when the learning process is revealed. With students this helps them consider and think about the learning process and how to transfer learning processes from one situation to another.

10. Takeaways

We leave with much more than we had upon arrival. This is in our minds and in our hearts and in our hands—practical tools and strategies that makes heading back into the classroom or our administrative office an exciting possibility.

Are there more reasons? Of course. Ten will do for now. 📺



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