

EQUITY BY DESIGN LEARNING PRESENTS

THE PRACTICE BRIEF™

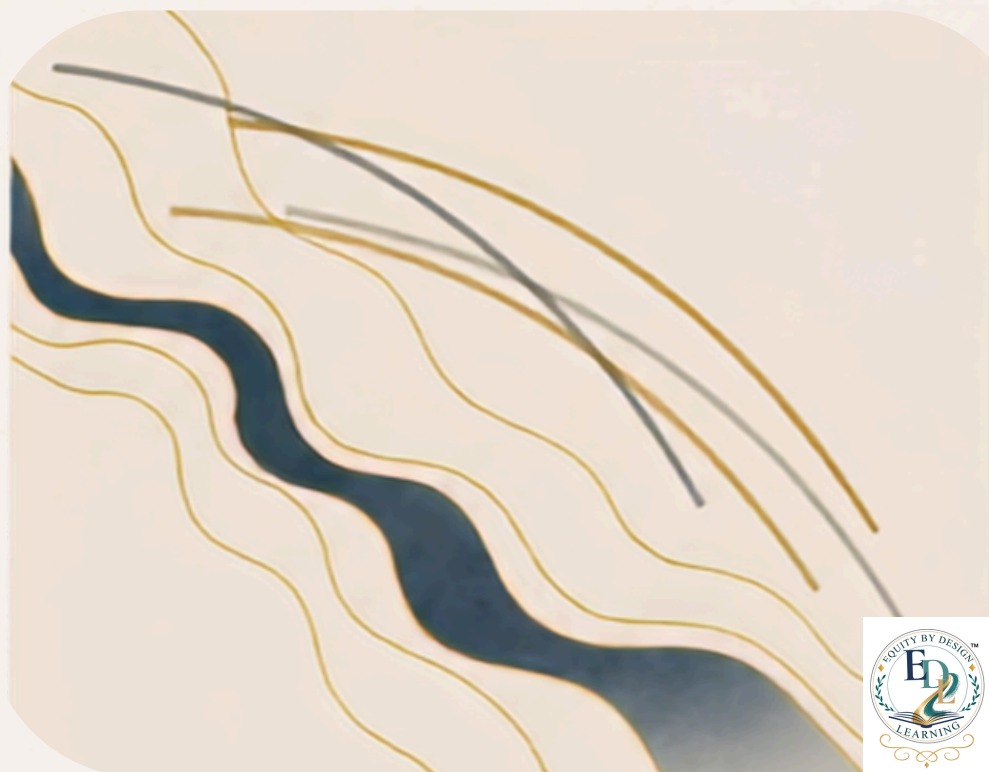
RESEARCH TO PRACTICE • DESIGNED FOR EVERY LEARNER

FOUNDING ISSUE | 2026
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES

THIS ISSUE

Engagement Is Designed, Not Demanded.

Creating Meaningful Participation
Pathways for Every Learner



INSIDE

Research • Design • Practice • Leadership



Published by Equity by Design Learning

ABOUT THE PRACTICE BRIEF™

The Practice Brief™ is a research-to-practice professional learning publication from Equity by Design Learning, created to help educators and educational leaders move meaningful ideas into meaningful action.

Each issue examines a timely challenge in education through the lenses of research, learner variability, instructional design, and implementation. Rather than stopping at what educators should know, *The Practice Brief™* asks a more practical question:

What can we design differently because of what we know?

Through concise research translation, practical strategies, leadership considerations, and implementation-ready tools, *The Practice Brief™* supports educators in creating learning environments that are more accessible, engaging, flexible, and responsive to the learners they serve.

OUR PUBLICATION PROMISE

Something to understand.

Something to use.

Something to implement.

RESEARCH → DESIGN → PRACTICE

PUBLICATION

The Practice Brief™
Founding Issue | 2026
Engagement Is Designed, Not Demanded
Published by Equity by Design Learning

EDITORIAL

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FROM THE EDITOR

Why The Practice Brief™

Educators rarely need more information.

They are surrounded by research, frameworks, initiatives, data, professional learning, new technologies, and expectations for continuous improvement. The challenge is often not finding another idea. The challenge is determining what that idea means for the learners sitting in front of us—and what we might do differently because of it.

That is why *The Practice Brief™* was created.

I have spent much of my career thinking about the space between what we know about teaching and learning and what educators are realistically able to implement. Research matters. Frameworks matter. Evidence matters. But their greatest value is realized when they help us make better decisions about the design of learning.

The Practice Brief™ is intended to live in that space.

Each issue will take a meaningful challenge in education and examine it through research, instructional design, learner variability, and practice. But we will not stop with the research. We will ask what it means, what barriers we might be overlooking, what we can design differently, and what implementation might actually look like in classrooms, schools, and educational systems.

For this Founding Issue, we begin with engagement.

When students do not participate in the ways we expect, it can be easy to interpret what we see as a lack of motivation, effort, or interest. Sometimes those explanations may be part of the story. But there is another question worth asking:

What if the barrier is not entirely within the learner, but somewhere within the design?

That question does not lower expectations. It asks us to become more intentional about how learners access, participate in, and demonstrate their learning.

That is the work I hope *The Practice Brief™* supports—not the pursuit of one perfect strategy, but the development of a design mindset that continually asks who can access the learning, who can participate meaningfully, what may be getting in the way, and what we have the power to redesign.

Because meaningful change does not happen simply because we know more.

It happens when what we know changes what we design.



Dr. Sherry Fischer-Copeland
Founder & Editor

“Meaningful change does not happen simply because we know more. It happens when what we know changes what we design.”

THE DESIGN QUESTION™

What if student disengagement is not always a motivation problem— but sometimes a design problem?

When participation does not look the way we expect, our first instinct may be to ask what the learner needs to change.

Design thinking invites another question:

What might we change about the conditions for participation?

NOTICE → QUESTION → REDESIGN

Notice the behavior. Question the barrier. Redesign the pathway.



THE FEATURE BRIEF

Engagement Is Designed, Not Demanded.

Moving from assumptions about motivation to intentional conditions for participation

Engagement is often treated as something students either bring to learning or they do not.

They are motivated or unmotivated. Interested or uninterested. Participating or disengaged.

But engagement is more complex than a visible behavior, and what educators observe may tell only part of the story.

LOOKING BEYOND THE BEHAVIOR

A student does not answer when a question is posed aloud. Another leaves the camera off during a virtual lesson. A learner waits for help before beginning an assignment. Someone contributes extensively in writing but rarely speaks during discussion.

Each behavior is visible.

The reason behind it is not.

When participation differs from what we expect, it can be tempting to interpret the behavior quickly: the student is unmotivated, distracted, unprepared, resistant, or simply unwilling to participate.

Sometimes motivation is part of the explanation. But it is rarely the only possibility.

Participation can also be shaped by processing time, confidence, language, accessibility, prior experiences, clarity of expectations, technology, psychological safety, relevance, task complexity, and the number and type of participation pathways available.

That distinction matters because our interpretation influences our response.

If disengagement is understood primarily as a learner deficit, the response often becomes an attempt to change the learner: participate more, try harder, speak up, pay attention, become more motivated.

A design perspective asks something different.

Before asking how we can make the learner engage, we can examine the conditions in which engagement is being requested.

FROM COMPLIANCE TO DESIGN

Instead of asking:

Why won't this student participate?

Try asking:

What might be making meaningful participation difficult?

And:

What could I redesign without changing the learning goal?

Preserve the goal. Examine the pathway.

THE FEATURE BRIEF | CONTINUED

Designing the Conditions for Engagement

Engagement is not simply something a learner possesses. It emerges through an interaction between the learner and the learning experience.

ENGAGEMENT AS AN INTERACTION

Engagement does not exist entirely within the learner.

It emerges through an interaction among the learner, the learning goal, the task, the environment, and the opportunities available for meaningful participation.

That means educators cannot manufacture motivation on demand. Nor can instructional design eliminate every barrier a learner may experience.

What educators can influence are the conditions surrounding learning.

- We can clarify why the learning matters.
- We can make the entry point visible.
- We can provide time to process before requiring a response.

We can distinguish the learning goal from a participation behavior that may not actually be necessary to demonstrate it.

We can offer purposeful ways to contribute while maintaining common expectations for learning.

And we can notice when a routine designed for efficiency has unintentionally become a barrier to participation.

This is where design becomes powerful.

The goal is not to create a different lesson for every learner or provide unlimited choice. It is to anticipate predictable variability and create enough flexibility that more learners can enter, participate in, and remain connected to meaningful learning.

DESIGN BEFORE WE JUDGE

A design mindset changes the sequence.

Rather than beginning with:

What is wrong with the student's engagement?

We begin with:

What does meaningful engagement require in this learning experience?

Then:

Which parts of that requirement are essential to the learning goal?

And finally:

Where might the design be creating an unnecessary barrier?

These questions do not remove learner responsibility. They make educator responsibility more precise.

Students remain responsible for learning, effort, contribution, and growth.

Educators remain responsible for designing conditions in which meaningful participation is genuinely possible.

That is the distinction at the center of this issue:

Engagement cannot simply be demanded after the learning environment has been designed. Engagement must be considered while the learning environment is being designed.

ENGAGEMENT HAPPENS IN THE INTERACTION



Engagement is not one variable to fix. It is an interaction to understand.

Students remain responsible for learning. Educators remain responsible for designing conditions in which meaningful participation is possible.

What We Know About Engagement

Research gives us a more complex picture of engagement than visible participation alone.

Student engagement is not a single behavior or fixed learner characteristic. Research across motivation, learning sciences, and instructional design suggests that engagement is multidimensional, shaped by interactions among learners, tasks, relationships, environments, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

For educators, the important question is not simply whether students appear engaged, but what the learning environment may be doing to support—or constrain—their engagement.

01

RESEARCH SAYS

Engagement is more than observable participation.

Research commonly describes engagement as involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. A learner may therefore be intellectually engaged even when that engagement is not expressed through the most visible classroom behaviors.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004

DESIGN IMPLICATION

Avoid using one behavior as the sole evidence of engagement.

Consider multiple forms of evidence: contribution, persistence, questioning, reflection, creation, written response, discussion, and application.

02

RESEARCH SAYS

Motivation is influenced by the conditions surrounding learning.

Self-determination research identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as important psychological needs associated with motivation and engagement.

Ryan & Deci, 2020

DESIGN IMPLICATION

Create meaningful agency without removing structure.

Offer purposeful choices in participation, resources, process, or demonstration when those choices do not alter the intended learning goal.

03

RESEARCH SAYS

Learner variability is predictable.

Universal Design for Learning encourages educators to anticipate differences in how learners engage with, access, and demonstrate learning rather than designing for an imagined 'average' learner.

CAST, 2024

DESIGN IMPLICATION

Plan pathways before barriers appear.

Build appropriate options for engagement and participation into the original learning design rather than relying exclusively on retrofitted solutions.

THE PRACTICE BRIEF TAKEAWAY

Engagement becomes easier to understand when we stop looking for one visible behavior and begin looking at the interaction between the learner and the learning design.

RESEARCH → DESIGN → PRACTICE

Research featured: Fredricks et al. (2004); Ryan & Deci (2020); CAST (2024). Full references appear in the References section/resource notes.

When Participation Doesn't Look Like Participation

- What educators observe matters, but observation and interpretation are not the same thing.
- A visible behavior can tell us what happened without necessarily telling us why it happened.

**BEHAVIOR IS VISIBLE.
BARRIERS OFTEN ARE NOT.
OBSERVE FIRST, INTERPRET CAREFULLY.**

	What We See	What We Might Assume	What Else Might Be True?
01	Student rarely speaks aloud.	<i>'They aren't engaged.'</i>	The learner may be processing, contributing in writing, building confidence, or waiting for a safer entry point.
02	Camera remains off.	<i>'They aren't participating.'</i>	Technology, privacy, home environment, bandwidth, comfort, or accessibility may affect camera use independently of learning.
03	Student waits before beginning.	<i>'They aren't motivated.'</i>	The entry point, directions, task structure, or first step may not yet be clear.
04	Student avoids group discussion.	<i>'They don't want to collaborate.'</i>	Roles, expectations, psychological safety, processing time, or the participation structure may be creating friction.
05	Student contributes primarily in writing.	<i>'They need to participate more.'</i>	Writing may be a meaningful pathway through which the learner processes ideas and contributes substantive thinking.

THE DESIGN PAUSE™

Before responding to disengagement, pause between what you observed and what you concluded.

01

What did I actually observe?

NOTICE

02

What am I assuming about why it happened?

QUESTION

03

What barrier might I investigate before deciding how to respond?

REDESIGN

One Learning Goal. Multiple Ways In.

Providing multiple pathways for participation does not mean creating different expectations for every learner. It means distinguishing what students need to learn from how they are expected to participate while learning it.

PRESERVE THE GOAL. EXPAND THE PATHWAYS.



FLEXIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN "ANYTHING GOES."

A participation pathway is meaningful when it allows the learner to engage with the intended thinking or learning, not simply avoid it.

The question is not:

"How would you like to participate?"

The stronger design question is:

"Which forms of participation allow students to engage meaningfully with this learning goal?"

Designing Meaningful Participation Pathways

Start with the **learning**, not the participation behavior.

01

NAME THE LEARNING

What must students know, understand, or demonstrate?

Separate the actual learning target from the activity being used to reach it.

02

IDENTIFY THE PARTICIPATION DEMAND

How are students currently expected to participate?

Speak? Write? Collaborate? Remain on camera?
Respond immediately? Produce something?

03

TEST THE REQUIREMENT

Ask: Is this participation behavior essential to the learning goal?

If YES → maintain it and provide appropriate supports.
If NO → consider another meaningful pathway.

04

DESIGN PURPOSEFUL OPTIONS

Which additional pathway could preserve the thinking while reducing an unnecessary barrier?

The goal isn't maximum choice. It is meaningful access to participation.

SEE IT IN PRACTICE

LEARNING GOAL

Students will analyze evidence and defend a conclusion.

CURRENT PARTICIPATION DEMAND

Every student immediately explains their conclusion aloud to the whole class.

DESIGN TEST

Does speaking immediately before the whole class measure the intended learning?

Not necessarily. The goal is analysis and evidence-based reasoning.

REDESIGNED PATHWAYS

Students might: speak their analysis; write a response before sharing; annotate evidence and explain their reasoning; discuss with a partner before contributing to the larger group.

**ANALYZE → USE EVIDENCE →
DEFEND A CONCLUSION**

DESIGN DECISION"

If changing the participation pathway changes what students are expected to learn, reconsider the option.

If the learning remains intact while an unnecessary barrier is reduced, you may have created meaningful flexibility.

FLEX THE PATHWAY. PRESERVE THE LEARNING.

From Barrier to Design Response

Small instructional adjustments can create meaningful opportunities for participation while preserving rigorous learning expectations.

Don't redesign the learner.

Redesign the learning experience.

THE DESIGN RESPONSE MATRIX•

				
What is happening?	POSSIBLE BARRIER What might be contributing?	DESIGN RESPONSE What could it redesign?	PRESERVE What learning remains constant?	EVIDENCE How will I know it helped?
 Students rarely volunteer.	 Participation requires immediate verbal response.	 Provide think time, written entry, or partner discussion before whole-group sharing.	 Students still analyze and communicate ideas.	 More learners contribute meaningful thinking.
 Students stop after the first mistake.	 Fear of public error.	 Normalize revision and private feedback before public sharing.	 Students continue working toward the same learning target.	 Greater persistence and completion.
 Only the same students participate.	 One participation pathway dominates.	 Offer structured discussion, written responses, digital tools, or collaborative roles.	 Every learner engages with the same objective.	 Participation broadens across the class.
 Students don't begin independently.	 The entry point is un clear.	 Model the first step, provide an example, or chunk the task.	 Students still complete the intended work.	 Students begin with less prompting.

PRACTICE TIP

When a challenge appears repeatedly, resist the urge to ask only:

“How do I get students to...?”

Instead ask:

“What conditions might be making this difficult?”

Often the most powerful instructional changes are not dramatic, they are intentional.

THIS WEEK'S DESIGN CHALLENGE

Choose one lesson you will teach this week.

Identify one participation barrier.

Redesign one instructional condition.

Collect evidence of what changes.

Reflect before changing anything else.

SMALL CHANGES. MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCES.

Redesign One Lesson

Use this guided process to redesign one lesson while preserving the intended learning goal.

Small instructional changes often create meaningful differences.

Choose one lesson you will teach this week.
Rather than redesigning the entire lesson, redesign one instructional condition that may improve meaningful participation.

01

CHOOSE YOUR LESSON

Which lesson will you teach this week?

02

IDENTIFY THE LEARNING GOAL

What must students know, understand, or be able to do?

03

NOTICE THE PARTICIPATION DEMAND

How are students currently expected to participate?

- ☐ Speak
- ☐ Write
- ☐ Discuss
- ☐ Collaborate
- ☐ Create
- ☐ Respond
- ☐ Present
- ☐ Reflect
- ☐ Other: _____

04

NOTICE A BARRIER

What participation challenge have you observed?

05

DESIGN ONE CHANGE

What ONE instructional condition could you redesign?

KEEP THE LEARNING GOAL THE SAME

Does the redesign preserve the intended learning?

- ☐ YES — Continue
- ☐ NOT YET — Reconsider the pathway

06

DECIDE WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

What evidence will tell you the redesign helped?

FLEX THE PATHWAY. PRESERVE THE LEARNING.

AFTER THE LESSON

- What changed?
- Who participated differently?
- What surprised you?
- What would you keep?
- What would you redesign next?

“Great instruction is rarely redesigned all at once. It is redesigned one thoughtful decision at a time.”

DESIGN REMINDERS



Preserve

Keep the learning goal constant.



Reduce

Reduce unnecessary barriers.



Support

Provide meaningful pathways.



Observe

Notice before concluding.



Reflect

Collect evidence.



Refine

Small improvements matter.

TAKE THE PRACTICE LAB WITH YOU



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RESOURCE ID: TPB-FI-PL01

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Who Gets to Participate?

Examining the difference between access to the lesson and access to meaningful participation.



THE EQUITY BY DESIGN CHECK™
Can every learner meaningfully reach the goal through the design I've created?

THE EQUITY QUESTION

Who can participate easily in the way I designed this – and
Who has to work around the design before learning can even begin?

ACCESS → PARTICIPATION → LEARNING

ACCESS IS NOT THE FINISH LINE

A learner can have access to a classroom, course, assignment, or digital platform and still encounter barriers to meaningful participation.

Equitable design asks us to look beyond whether learning is technically available and examine whether the conditions surrounding it create reasonable opportunities for learners to engage, contribute, and demonstrate their thinking.

 01 LANGUAGE Does participation depend unnecessarily on one form of language or communication? Consider processing, expression, vocabulary, and communication pathways.	 02 ACCESSIBILITY Can learners perceive, navigate, and interact with the learning materials and participation structures? Consider format, tools, navigation, sensory access, and assistive technology.
 03 PROCESSING TIME Does meaningful participation require an immediate response? Consider think time, preparation, pacing, and asynchronous response.	 04 TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT Are we interpreting technology or environmental limitations as learner disengagement? Consider devices, bandwidth, privacy, physical environment, and platform demands.
 05 CONFIDENCE & SAFETY Does participation require public risk before learners had an opportunity to develop confidence? Consider error, exposure, relationships, preparation, and psychological safety.	 06 PRIOR KNOWLEDGE & ENTRY Is the learner able to identify where and how to begin? Consider clarity, background knowledge, examples, sprints, and task entry points.

EQUITY DOES NOT MEAN REMOVING THE EXPECTATION.

Equitable design does not require every learner to have a different goal or an easier task. It asks whether whether **unnecessary barriers** are determining who gets a meaningful opportunity to reach the goal.

SAME DESTINATION = SAME PATHWAY

EQUITY PAUSE"

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>01 Who enters this learning experience most easily?</p> | <p>02 Who may encounter additional barriers?</p> | <p>03 Which barrier can I redesign without changing the learning goal?</p> |
|---|---|---|

What Does Your System Call “Engagement”?

The way an organization defines engagement influences what educators notice, design, reinforce, and measure.

THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION

Are we asking educators to create meaningful engagement, or are we primarily asking students to demonstrate visible compliance?

DEFINE → ALIGN → SUPPORT → LEARN

ENGAGEMENT OR COMPLIANCE?

Visible behaviors can provide useful information, but they are not always reliable proxies for meaningful engagement. When organizational expectations emphasize only what engagement looks like, educators may unintentionally design for compliance rather than learning.

WHEN WE LOOK PRIMARILY FOR...

- Camera on
- Speaking frequently
- Sitting still
- Immediate response
- Task completion
- Visible activity
- Following the same pathway

WE MAY BE MEASURING COMPLIANCE.

WHEN WE ALSO LOOK FOR...

- Meaningful contribution
- Evidence of thinking
- Persistence
- Questioning
- Reflection
- Application
- Progress toward the learning goal

WE BEGIN TO SEE ENGAGEMENT MORE FULLY.

THE LEADERSHIP AUDIT”

SUBSCRIBER TOOLKIT AVAILABLE
Leadership Discussion Guide

01

DEFINE

How does our organization currently define student engagement?

02

NOTICE

Which behaviors are educators expected to look for?

03

QUESTION

Could any of those behaviors be mistaken for engagement when they primarily indicate compliance?

04

EXPAND

What additional evidence could help us recognize meaningful cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement?

THIS DOES NOT MEAN EXPECTATIONS DON’T MATTER.

Attendance, participation, routines, deadlines, and behavioral expectations can all serve important purposes. The leadership challenge is to distinguish between **conditions that support learning** and behaviors that have become **substitutes for evidence of learning**.

ASK WHAT THE EXPECTATION IS FOR.

LEADERSHIP MOVE”

During your next classroom walkthrough, record evidence of student thinking before recording judgments about student engagement.

OBSERVE THE LEARNING BEFORE LABELING THE ENGAGEMENT.



One Change. Thirty Days.

Evidence of Impact.

Choose one participation barrier, make one intentional design change, and study what happens.

THE CHALLENGE

For the next 30 days, redesign one recurring condition for participation, and collect evidence before deciding whether it worked.

DESIGN → TRY → NOTICE → REFLECT → REFINE

01 NOTICE

Identify one recurring participation barrier.

DAYS 1–5

Ask:

- What am I observing?
- When does it happen?
- Who appears affected?
- What have I been assuming about it?



Collect baseline evidence before redesigning anything.

02 DESIGN

DESIGN

Change one instructional condition.

DAYS 6–10

Ask:

- What learning goal must remain constant?
- Which participation demand may be creating frustration?
- What meaningful alternative could I introduce?



PRESERVE THE GOAL. REDESIGN THE PATHWAY.

03 TRY + NOTICE

TRY + NOTICE

Use the redesigned pathway consistently.

DAYS 11–25

Watch for:

- Who participates?
- What forms does participation take?
- Does participation occur?
- Does the quality of thinking change?
- What unexpected effects appear?



Observe without changing five other things at once. That's important if we want the evidence to mean anything.

04 REFLECT + REFINE

REFLECT + REFINE

Compare what you noticed before and after the redesign.

DAYS 26–30

Ask:

- What changes?
- What stayed the same?
- Who benefited?
- Who still encountered barriers?
- What should I keep, revise, or discontinue?

USE EVIDENCE TO MAKE THE NEXT DESIGN DECISION.

EVIDENCE TRACKER™

BEFORE

What am I seeing now?

DURING

What appears to be changing?

AFTER

What evidence suggests impact?

Evidence I will collect:

student work,
participation patterns,
reflection responses,
completion data,
observation notes,
discussion contributions,
etc.

DESIGN NOTE:

Not every design will improve engagement—and that is useful information.

MY DESIGN COMMITMENT

For the next 30 days, I will redesign:

The learning goal I will preserve is:

The evidence I will collect is:

DON'T REDESIGN EVERYTHING. STUDY ONE CHANGE WELL.



Turn This Issue Into a Team Conversation.

Use this 60-minute experience to move from reading about engagement to examining and redesigning practice together.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION → COLLECTIVE LEARNING → SHARED ACTION

THE 60-MINUTE PLC

01

0–10 MINUTES

10 MIN

02

10–20 MINUTES

10 MIN

03

20–40 MINUTES

20 MIN

04

40–50 MINUTES

10 MIN

05

50–60 MINUTES

10 MIN

OPEN THE QUESTION

Revisit the Design Question™

What if student disengagement is not always a motivation problem, but sometimes a design problem?

- What about this question challenge or confirms our current thinking?
- Where do we see this tension in our own setting?

Listen for assumptions. Don't rush to solutions yet.

EXAMINE PRACTICE

Use the Hidden Barriers Lens

Invite participants to identify one behavior they commonly interpret as disengagement.

- What did we actually observe?
- What might we be assuming?
- What else might be contributing?

PARTICIPATION PATHWAYS PROCESS™

01

LEARNING GOAL

What must students learn?



02

PARTICIPATION DEMAND

What must students do now?



03

POTENTIAL BARRIER

What may create friction?



04

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY

What could change?



05

LEARNING PRESERVED

Is the goal still intact? ✓

SHARE + TEST

In pairs or small groups, participants share their redesign. Partners ask two questions:

- Does the redesign preserve the learning goal?
- Does it meaningfully reduce the identified barrier?

Then revise it if necessary.

COMMIT + CLOSE

Each participant completes:

- One design change I will try is...
- The evidence I will watch for is...
- I will know more...



FACILITATOR LENS™

If the conversation shifts toward changing expectations for learners, return the team to the learning goal.

Ask:

What do students actually need to learn — and which part of our current participation structure is necessary for demonstrating that learning?

EVIDENCE TO COLLECT

After the PLC, leaders might look for:

Lesson redesigns • Teacher reflections • Participation patterns
• Student work • Walkthrough evidence • Follow-up discussion

Professional learning becomes more valuable when teams return to evidence of what happened after implementation.

EXPAND THIS PLC

District subscribers receive:

- Facilitator talking points
- Presentation slides
- Printers & content guide
- Practice Lab™ • planning tool
- 30-Day Design Challenge™ tracker

RESOURCE ID: TPB-FI-PLC01

Professional learning matters most when the conversation changes the next instructional decision.

From Noticing to Redesign

A simple thinking process for responding to barriers without losing sight of the learning.

01

NOTICE

What am I actually observing?
Separate what happened from what you think it means.

02

OBSERVE; QUESTION

What am I assuming?
Pause before assigning motivation,
intention, ability, or effort.

03

INTERROGATE; UNDERSTAND

What might be contributing?
Consider the learner, task, environment,
participation demand, and potential barriers.

04

INVESTIGATE; DESIGN

What could I change?
Identify an unnecessary barrier and
create a meaningful alternative pathway.

05

REDESIGN; IMPLEMENT

What will I try?
Make one intentional change
while preserving the learning goal.

06

ACT; REFLECT

What does the evidence tell me?
Study what changed, what did not,
and what your next design decision
should be.

NOTICE → QUESTION → UNDERSTAND → DESIGN → IMPLEMENT → REFLECT

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FOUNDING ISSUE

THE DESIGN PRINCIPLE™

Design for participation before expecting participation.

Meaningful engagement is more likely
when learners encounter clear goals,
purposeful pathways, reasonable access,
and authentic opportunities to contribute.

EQUITY BY DESIGN LEARNING



CARRY IT FORWARD

The next time participation does not look
the way you expected, resist the urge to
begin with: "How do I make the student
engage?"

Begin instead with: "What do I notice—and
what can I learn before deciding what
needs to change?"

THE PRACTICE BRIEF™

FOUNDING ISSUE | 2026

Better outcomes begin with better design.

RESEARCH → DESIGN → PRACTICE

THE FOUNDING ISSUE DESIGN PRINCIPLE™

*Design for participation
before expecting participation.*

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