

Why Most PD Fails

Professional development is often prescribed—focused on new curricula, policies, or tools. But without addressing teachers' real needs, anxieties, and expectations, most PD fails to shift classroom practice.

The Culture Factor

Beliefs shape behaviors. If teachers believe some students 'just can't,' they set the bar lower. This results in easy tasks that limit growth. Culture—not curriculum—is often the real barrier.

What We Find in Classrooms

- Students are capable of more than they're asked to do.
- Teachers often underestimate student ability.
- Low expectations become self-fulfilling cycles.
- Teacher math anxiety impacts instructional confidence.

Recommendations for School Leaders

- Directly ask teachers about their needs—math confidence, behavior management, rigor.
- Confront tough cultural questions about expectations and beliefs.
- Pair PD with coaching that supports both instructional needs and mindsets - to help teachers feel confident and joy in their work.
- Celebrate progress and raise expectations continuously.
- Be a partner, not just an evaluator. Make a point for the teachers to see your value to them.

The Eureka Approach

At Eureka, we don't provide generic PD sessions. We work with the school teachers to provide the PD they actually need. By starting with our Math Culture Report, we identify the areas across the whole school that are specific to that school.

Case Example

In one district, teachers initially believed less than half their students could do grade-level math. After working with Eureka, expectations shifted. Within months, students who were considered 'low' were achieving grade-level benchmarks, and the district posted its highest growth scores in years.

Next Steps

Is your PD truly making an impact? Get in touch with us to discuss a more detailed and customized PD program for your teachers.