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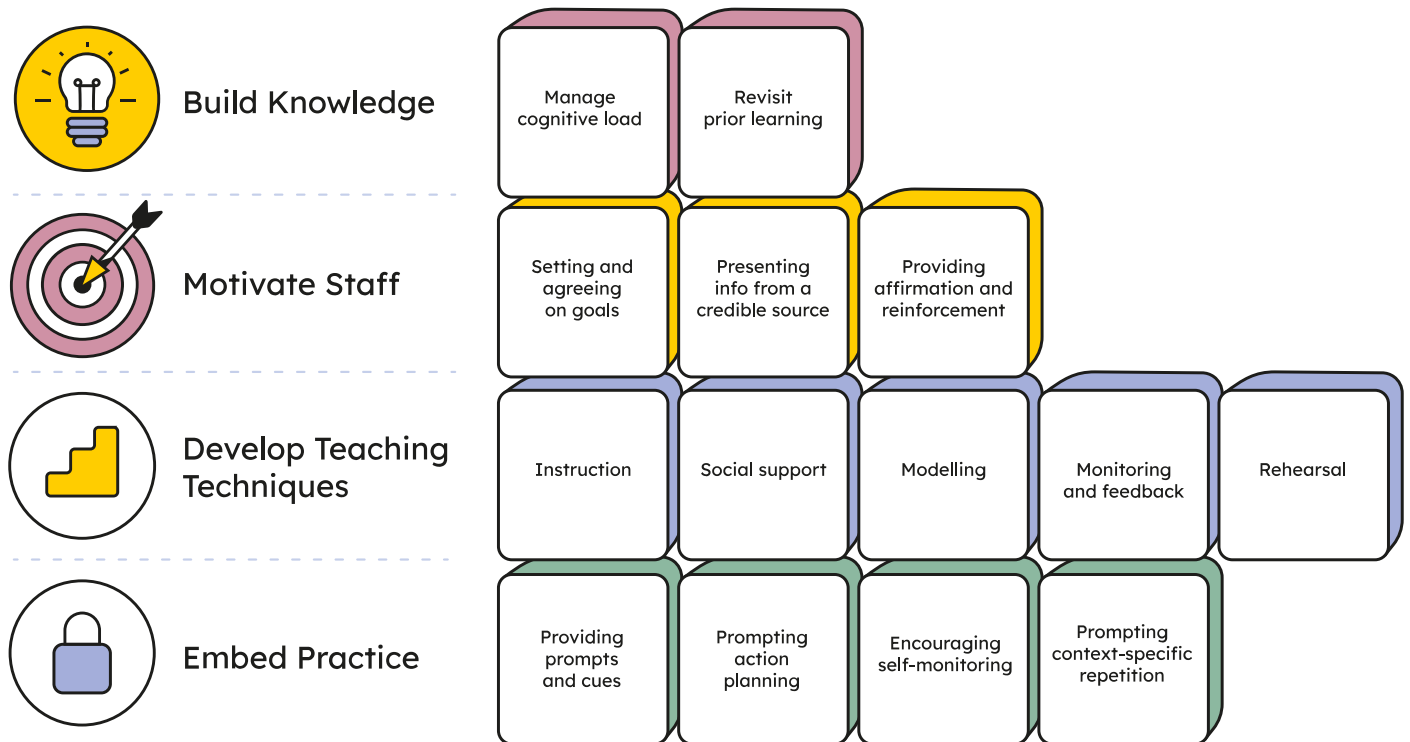
Achieving all aims of effective professional development with group PD and drop-ins

📌 The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has conducted extensive research into which ‘active ingredients of professional development’ ‘really work’, and have provided explicit guidance on what it takes to help teachers make meaningful improvements.

The EEF found that for professional development (PD) to be effective, it needs to achieve four broad aims, each of which is enabled by a number of active ingredients or ‘mechanisms’:

- **Build knowledge:** support teachers to know something valuable they didn’t know before.
- **Motivate staff:** help teachers want to change.
- **Develop teaching techniques:** assist teachers to competently do things differently.
- **Embed practice:** ensure that changes made are sustained.

The 14 mechanisms of effective PD are divided across four key aims:



Steplab helps schools to meet all four aims of PD; each of the 14 mechanisms is supported through Steplab's coherent and balanced approach to PD.

Instructional Coaching is one powerful way to activate these mechanisms, but another impactful way to activate all 14 mechanisms is to use a cycle of group PD followed by lesson drop-ins.



Building knowledge

A group PD session carefully **manages cognitive load**; each session is focused on one precise teaching technique that will improve teaching across the school. The technique is selected from a goal which leaders have chosen as part of a context specific and coherent PD curriculum.

By recapping the previous technique each session, leaders can provide coherence and offer PD that **builds on prior learning**.



Motivating teachers

Leaders **set and agree the highest leverage goals** for teachers to work on, identifying those which will have the most impact on improving teaching across the school. Teachers collectively working on an overall goal together unites them and builds connection and motivation.

Group PD sessions are grounded in evidence; study modules are provided and include an evidence summary built from academic research enabling leaders to present information from **credible sources**.

Precise praise is a key part of a group PD session. Leaders are encouraged to celebrate effective practice by sharing drop-in feedback and shoutouts from the previous week. Lesson drop-ins provide further opportunities to provide **affirmation and reinforcement**.



Developing teaching techniques

Each group PD session gives an opportunity for leaders to provide quality **instruction** on a specific teaching technique. Success criteria is discussed and used when leaders use **modelling** to support deeper understanding.

Rehearsal is a key part of group PD sessions, giving all teachers a chance to plan and practise a technique before they use it in the high-stakes environment of the classroom.

Social support from peers is a fundamental part of group PD, with teachers rehearsing in groups or pairs. The drop-ins which follow group PD sessions provide an opportunity for further **monitoring and feedback** of techniques developed during each session.



Embedding practice

Each group PD session ends with a chance for teachers to **action-plan**, consider the real classroom context they might use this step in, and what **prompts and cues** may be needed. Drop-ins consolidate this.

Leaders use questioning and reflection throughout PD sessions to encourage self-monitoring. Teachers are far more likely to continue working on small changes to their practice if they know a colleague will be popping into their lesson that week to see how it's going and provide some precise feedback, ensuring more **context-specific repetition**.

Building a programme of meaningful and coherent PD isn't easy. When leaders use a cycle of group PD followed by drop-ins, we can ensure that PD activates mechanisms to ensure that teachers make sustained improvements to their practice.

