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The Upduo Playbook for School Districts

A Modern Approach to Professional Development

Find subs, plan a training. This has been the most common way for districts to teach new instructional practices, implement new curriculum, or leverage new technology.

But anyone who has ever sat through "PD" knows that this is not the best way. One-and-done lecture-based training doesn't engage teachers in the meaningful discourse and collaboration they need to change practice with confidence. Not to mention, substitute teachers are on short supply and kids don't learn as much when teachers aren't in class.

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In this guide, we dive into the issues with standard training and show you how to implement continuous learning in a way that is measurable, effective, and lightweight for you and for teachers.

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01

The challenges and opportunities with professional development

1 Year

Amount of time students spend being "taught" by substitutes between Kindergarten and 12th Grade.

$1.5B

Amount of money California alone has allocated to "Educator Effectiveness" through a recent Block Grant.

Whether it's low test scores, high discipline rates, ambitious innovation, or other system-wide challenges, training is often the bottom line for most root-cause analyses.

But without truly effective training, classroom practice won't change quickly enough to make a difference for *this year's students* nor honor teacher expertise. It can also result in giving up on and writing off change that would be impactful if only training was of quality. We love to tend to learning, but hate training.

In the 2021–22 school year, California experienced its fifth consecutive drop in total public K–12 enrollment, losing 110,000 students, according to the State Department of Finance. If current trends hold for the next decade, the state would see a further decline of 524,000 by 2030–31. These students are moving to school models that are innovative, more effective, and more convenient for students and their families.

02

Introducing peer to-peer training and coaching

So what works best for teachers?

When it comes to improving teacher performance, job retention, and student learning outcomes, peer-to-peer learning conversations and collaborative mentoring sessions that occur week-in and week-out provide far better results than traditional one-off PD training sessions.

Engages the entire team

The solution should engage everyone in the organization in an activity (not passive learning) so that teachers and teacher leaders can continue to learn and share their knowledge with each other.

Offers continuous learning

Training is never a one-time deal. Make sure to implement a solution that is built for ongoing practice and reflection. By reflecting on the same concepts with different partners, we reinforce the subjects while building additional complexity when appropriate.

Honors existing expertise

Most of the teachers and leaders that you're "training" are already excellent at what they do. They draw on years of experience and earned wisdom in everything they do. They just don't know *this next thing* yet. Choose a system that gives them space to share what they've mastered, while exposing them to new concepts and frameworks instead of talking at them like it's their first rodeo.

Enables scalable curriculum

When replacing or supplementing your current training strategy, you don't want to sacrifice scalability. The solution you choose should allow you to scale and re-use your session topics, conversation starters, and prompts easily across the entire district.

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Feels easy, enjoyable, and natural

Peer-to-peer training sessions should be something that people want to participate in, rather than feeling awkward or pointless. Be mindful of this when choosing a solution and when developing curriculum. Allow participants to naturally share their ideas and challenges, without having to roleplay or act.

Provides participation tracking

With peer-to-peer training sessions happening across the district, there will be a lot of useful data produced. Make sure that you can track participation by individual, location, and session type. You should also be able to track overall growth.

Makes it easy to calculate impact

The solution you choose should offer metric-specific reporting, integrate with your existing reporting systems, and/or provide insights that you can use when reporting on impact. This way, you can discover correlations between training participation and student outcomes and drill down into which types of sessions have the biggest impact.
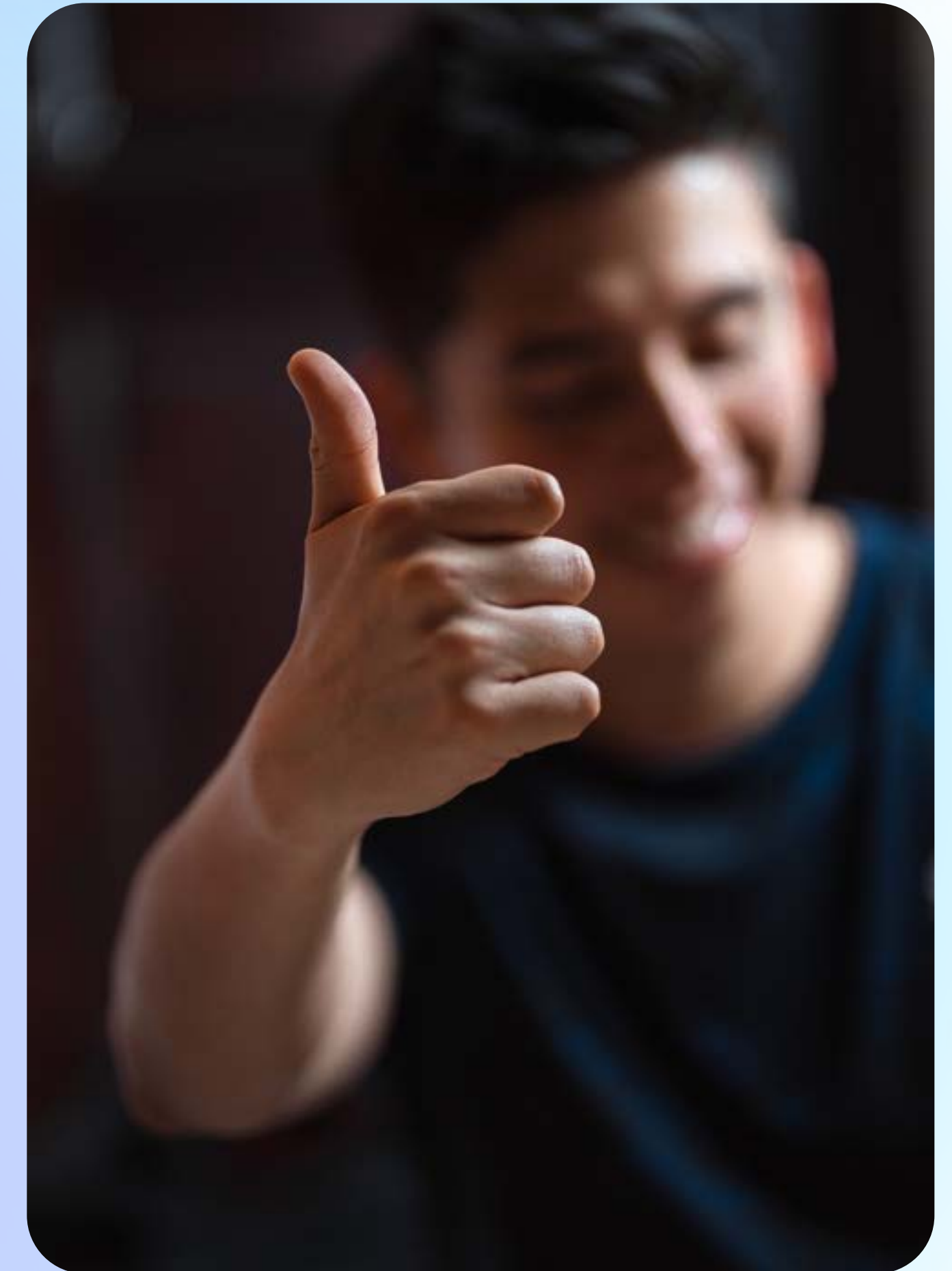
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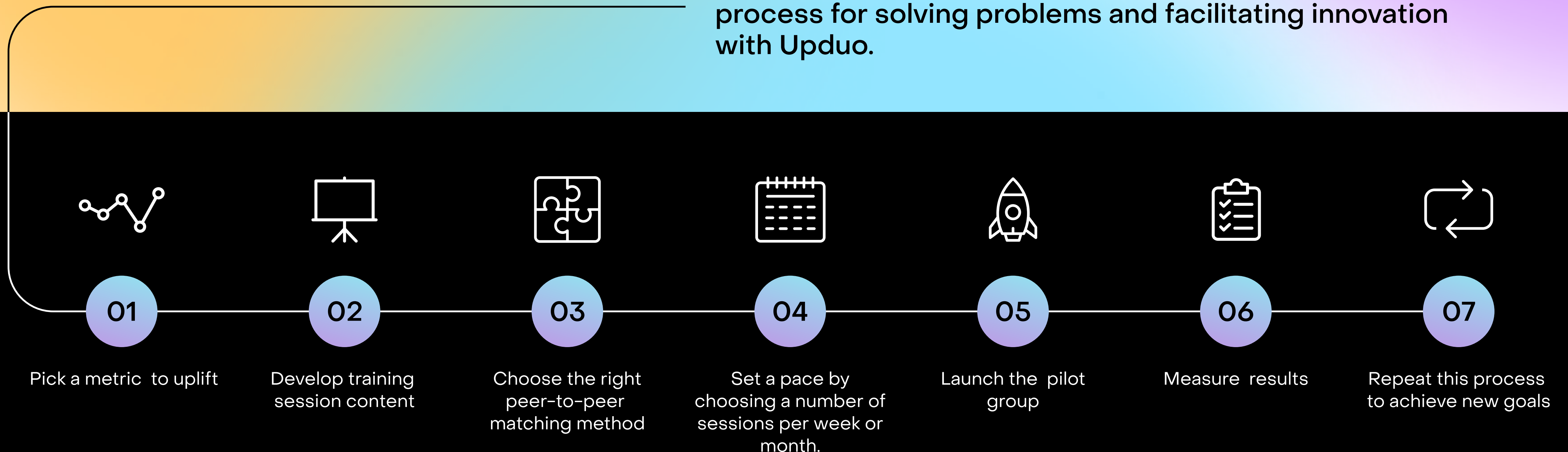# How to use Upduo to improve educator effectiveness and student outcomes
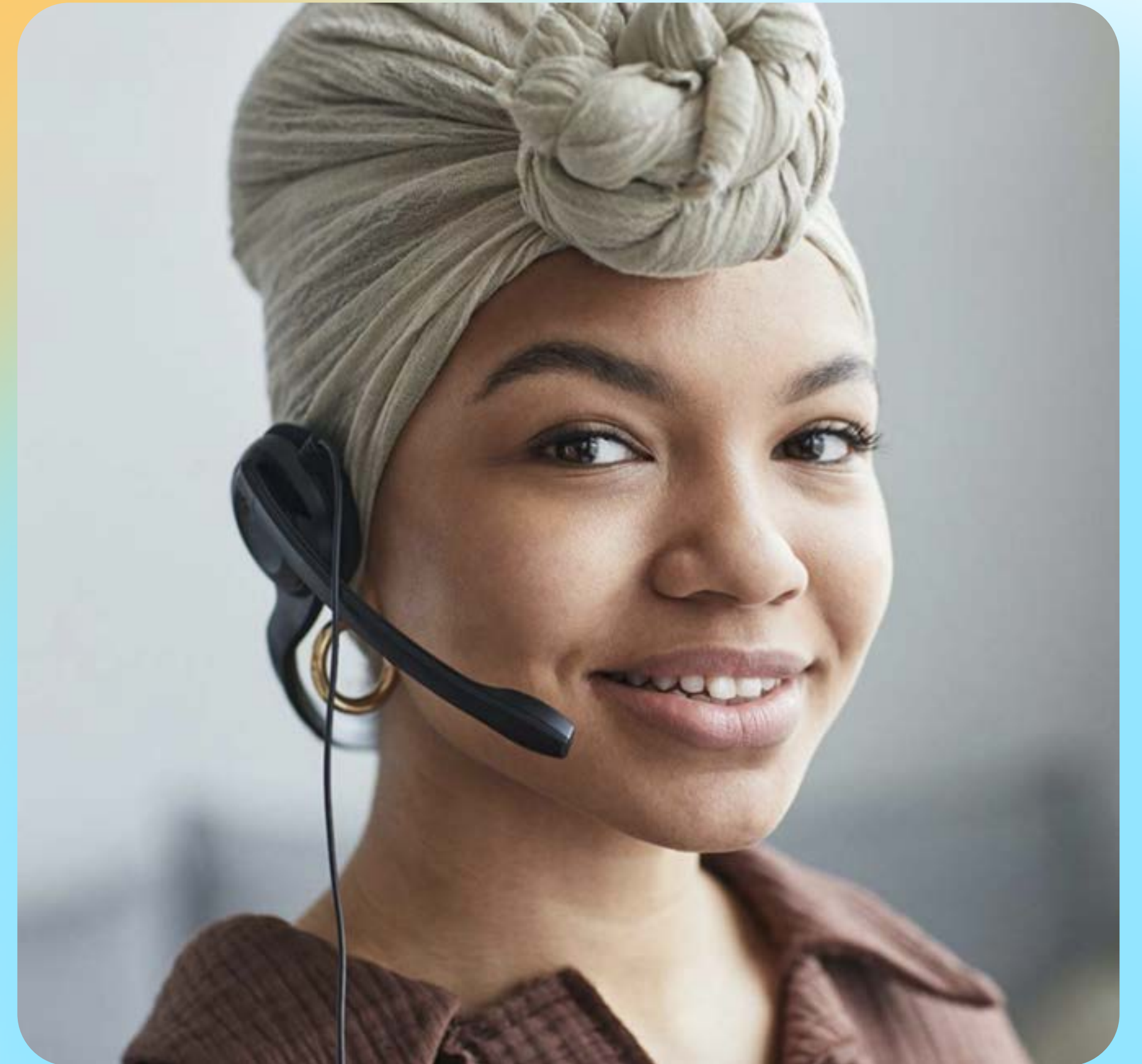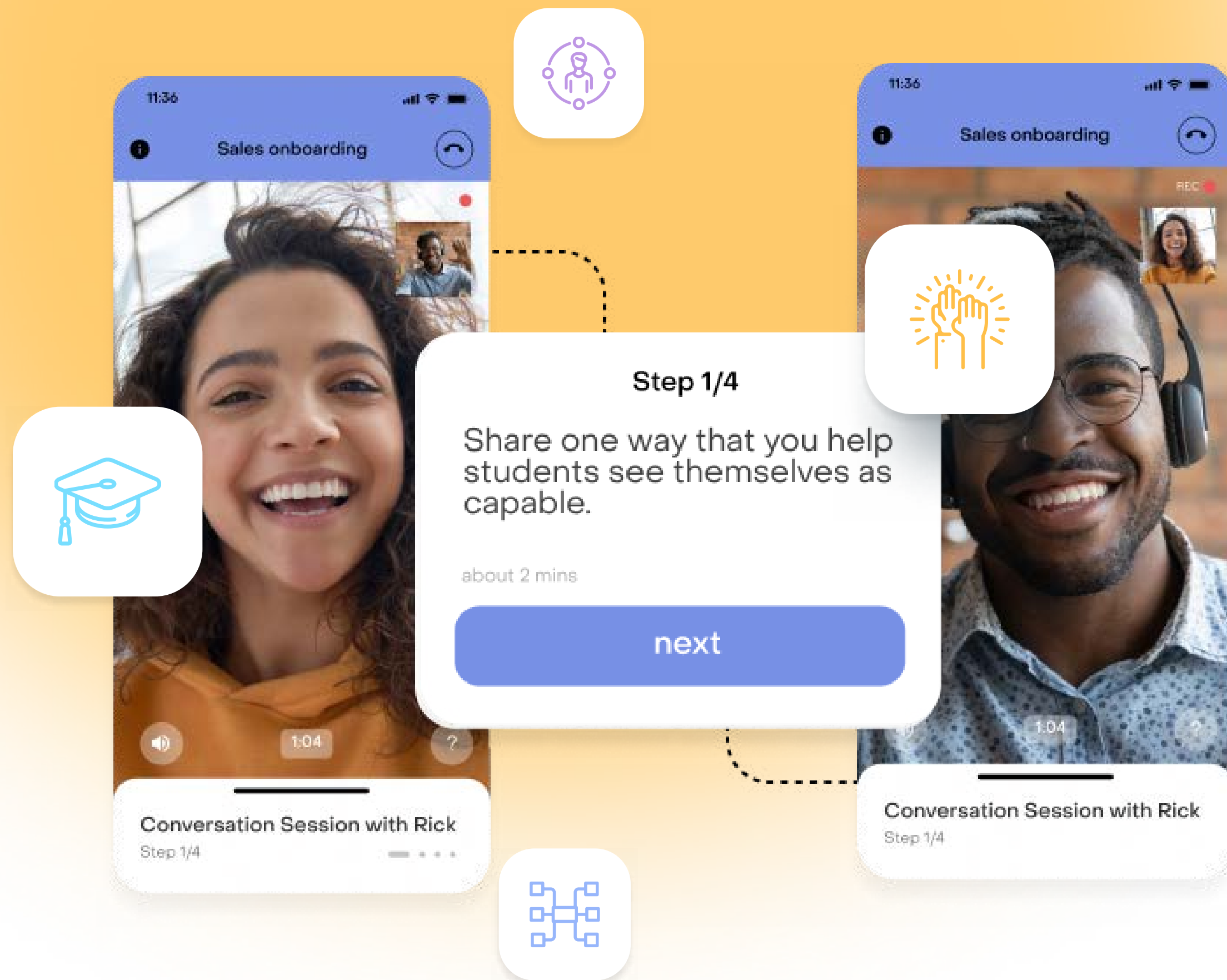
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Upduo is a PLC-based learning platform designed for school districts and systems

Teachers and teacher-leaders connect with partners during 1:1 video calls to learn and practice new strategies together. Cards guide them through the conversation and prompt them to discuss topics and share ideas in a natural way (no roleplaying) in just 12–15 minutes per session.

Upduo sessions are designed to sharpen necessary teaching skills, map learnings to student outcomes, and develop confident, capable education professionals.

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The most effective training engages educators on a regular basis in conversations and idea-sharing that will truly benefit them and arm them with tons of useful strategies when handling challenges, implementing new frameworks, or getting aligned with the people they work alongside.

To put all of this into practice, we've defined a 7-part process for solving problems and facilitating innovation with Upduo.

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Pick a metric to uplift

02

Develop training session content

03

Choose the right peer-to-peer matching method

04

Set a pace by choosing a number of sessions per week or month.

05

Launch the pilot group

06

Measure results

07

Repeat this process to achieve new goals

01 Pick a metric to uplift

The first step is to identify a problem that you want to solve. This could be something concrete, like transitioning to a new textbook or piece of technology, or something more complex like a systematic solution to persistent underperformance.
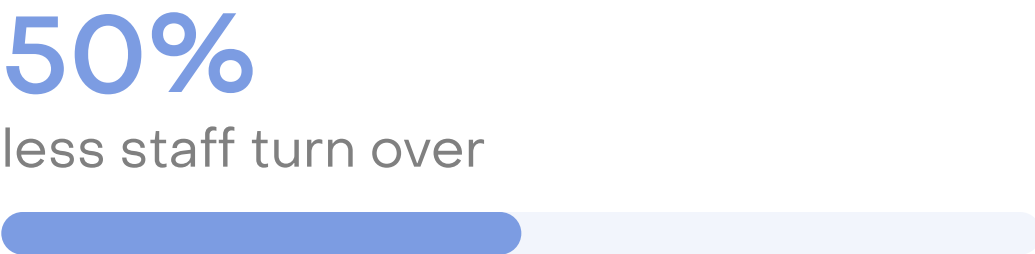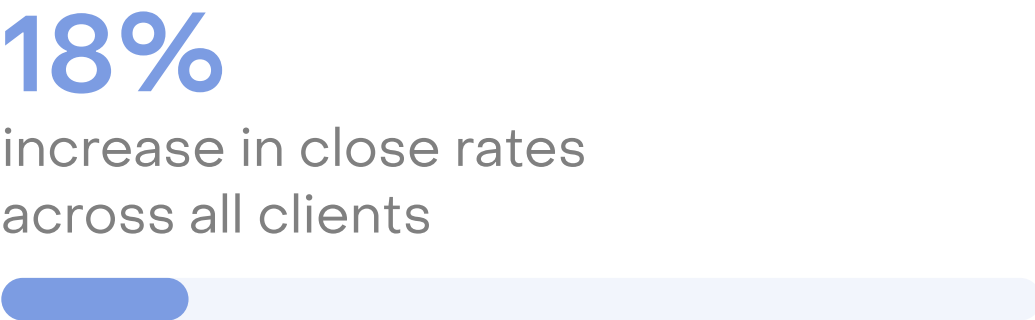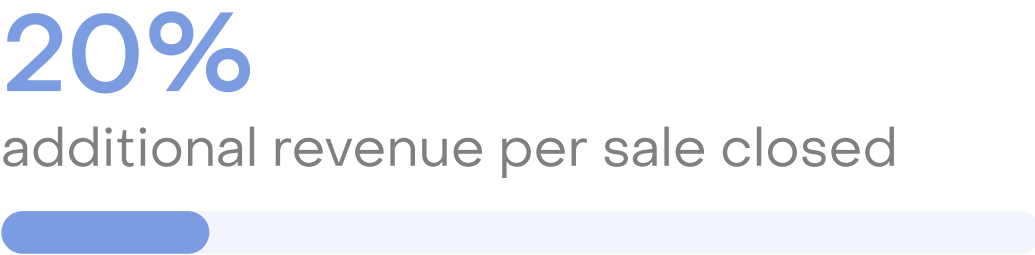
Performance Metrics to Improve with Upduo

· Adoption of new instructional frameworks
· Student outcomes of specific groups
· Discipline around data-driven practices
· Teacher job satisfaction and retention
· Paraprofessional domain expertise

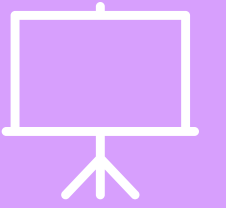### Paraprofessionals: The Big Opportunity

If you want to overhaul PD, but aren't sure what to start with first, we recommend beginning with a curriculum for paraprofessionals. This can be a quick win in creating momentum and connection across a group who works so closely with students.

See the Upduo impact

Outside of the classroom, Upduo has improved the performance of sales teams. See our impact below :

20%
additional revenue per sale closed

18%
increase in close rates across all clients

50%
less staff turn over

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02 Develop training session content

The next step is to come up with the curriculum. We're not talking about videos and quizzes, but rather prompts that will guide participants through productive 1-on-1 conversations. Teachers could share classroom ideas, school leaders could share thoughts about retaining great teachers, or paraprofessionals could share techniques for developing subject area knowledge.

If you choose to work with Upduo, our education team will work with you to come up with initial session content, based on the best practices we've discovered through hosting over 1 million peer to peer conversations.

Example Session Prompts:
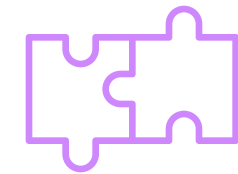
Understanding and Integrating a New Framework

- Introduce yourself
- What experience have you had changing your teaching practice.
- In your own words, describe the intent of the {FRAMEWORK_NAME} framework. (ie. IB, CBE, Grading Practices, Thinking Classrooms)
- Discuss your next few steps towards implementing it.
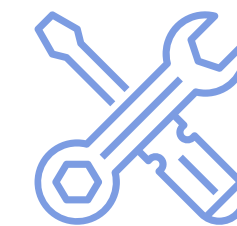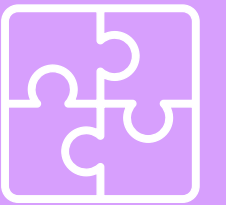
Doing More with a New Tool

- Introduce yourself and say what you like about {RESOURCE_NAME}. (ie. McGraw Hill's Reveal Program, Khan Academy)
- Share some of anything you recently started doing with it.
- Discuss what you'd like it to do and whether or not your partner knows how.
- Commend each other for your progress.

A Collaborative Data Inquiry

- Introduce yourself
- Ask your partner, "Looking at the data, what do you notice and what do you wonder?"
- Then share your perspective.
- Ask your partner, "What might you not have noticed if you hadn't looked at the data??"
- Then share your perspective.
- Describe a possible action that you or your team could take, given the discussion that you just had."

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03 Choose the right peer-to-peer matching method

You need to pick a method for matching educators in real time. With Upduo, you can utilize our algorithmic matching or set scheduled times and communicate these with your team.

You might also be wondering if you should match people based on their seniority levels. This all comes down to your main goals. If you want to use Upduo for improving student outcomes, peer-to-peer training is highly effective. Peers talk with each other and share hard-earned lessons from the trenches. Nothing is theoretical or fluffy. Peers feel more comfortable when working with each other, and are less likely to get performance anxiety.

Peer-to-peer sessions can also improve district culture and foster a belief that it's everyone's job is to uplift each other.
However, there are benefits to pairing inexperienced educators with district leadership. This can help new teachers learn how to achieve their career goals and understand the goals and history of the district. When you pair inexperienced teachers with experienced colleagues, you ensure that knowledge is being transferred and that turnover doesn't mean that collective experience has to go to waste.
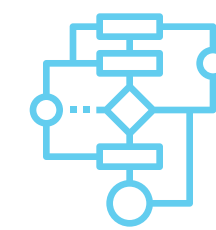
Scheduled Session Times

For smaller communities, you should set scheduled weekly times. For example, you might encourage people to fulfill their session requirements at the beginning of PLC time or carve out new time for this specific collaboration. This way, there will always be enough people available to pair up.

Algorithmic Matching

For communities of over 250 participants, you can utilize Upduo's algorithmic matching. Whether before/after school, at lunch, or during a prep period, people will be matched with someone who is available. You can set Upduo so that matches will be by subject area, leadership responsibilities, or, by mastery of specific concepts.

04 Set a pace by choosing a number of sessions per week or month.

Give participants a requirement for how many sessions they need to do.

You might set an expectation of 1–2 sessions per week, or 4–8 sessions per month.

Let them know that they can always do more sessions when work is slow or when there's something they're intrinsically motivated to learn more about.

05 Launch the pilot group

We recommend starting off with a pilot group that's about 30% the size of your team.

Rolling out with a smaller group is not only easier, but it's also more effective. You can check your results and make sure that outcomes are positively impacted before rolling out the same content to the district at large.

Note:
Pilot groups can be teachers themselves or people who lead teachers. Learning should happen across the system.

06 Measure results

Top Metrics to Watch for Movements:

Absentee Rate

Attempts at new practice

Test Scores by Subgroup

% regularity of new practice

Discipline Action by Subgroup

Net promoter score of training

Teacher attrition rate

Teacher Job Satisfaction
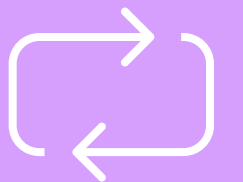
Adoption depth of new curriculum

Calculate whether or not the training sessions had an impact on the key metric you wanted to improve. You can measure this in a few different ways.

Let's say you want to reduce the suspension rate for English Language Learners. You could compare the pilot group's first two months of using Upduo with the two months prior or with a similarly sized group of students whose teachers are not using Upduo for the same time period. Or for a third option, you could compare your new suspension rate with your former average baseline.

Once you know your curriculum is effective, you can report on it and roll it out to all of your staff.

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07 Repeat this process to achieve new goals

What metrics do you want to impact next?

If you started off with session curriculum for suspension rate of English Language Learners, you might develop onboarding curriculum to see if you can retain new teachers longer.

Or, if your first curriculum was more general (coaching skills, grading policy, etc) in order to boost overall test scores, you might try creating curriculum for a textbook adoption to see if you can solve for poor adoption fidelity.

The best way to learn is to teach. Scheduling regular peer teaching sessions district wide would be unmanageable. With Upduo, you can run highly effective and scalable peer teaching sessions that teachers will actually want to participate in, all in less time that it takes to organize training events and find subs.

To learn more about virtual peer-to-peer training and find out if Upduo is right for you, contact sales@upduo.com.