

Decision Clarity Audit

Clarifying Decisions That Guide Consistent and Appropriate Use Across Contexts

For teachers, instructional leaders, and district teams examining new tools, initiatives, or approaches during planning.

Core Question

What decisions need to be clarified so this tool, initiative, or approach is used consistently and appropriately across contexts?

Purpose

New tools, initiatives, and approaches often include defined goals, steps, or recommended uses.

What is less consistently specified are the decisions that guide implementation in practice—when the tool should be used, what information should inform its use, how outputs or evidence should be interpreted, what responses are appropriate, and how follow-up should occur.

This tool is designed to help make those decisions evident and explicit so that use is more consistent, appropriate, and aligned across classrooms, teams, and settings. Across research on implementation and decision-making, a consistent finding is: Variation in outcomes is often linked to variation in how decisions are enacted in practice.

6-Step Decision Clarity Audit

Select one tool, initiative, or approach.

Identify one recurring decision point where its use is expected (e.g., planning instruction, reviewing student work, responding to feedback, determining next steps).

Then examine the following:

1. When and Where Use Occurs

Is it clear when and where this should be used—and when it should not?

- When is this tool or or approach expected to be used?
- In which contexts or situations does it apply?
- Are there conditions where its use is not appropriate?

2. Information That Informs Use

Is it clear what information should inform use in this context?

- What information should be considered when using this tool or approach?
- What sources are expected (e.g., student work, data, observations, system outputs)?
- Is it clear what is sufficient—and what may be missing?

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3. Interpretation of Information or Outputs

Is there a shared understanding of how information or outputs should be interpreted?

- How should available information or tool outputs be understood?
- What should be prioritized in interpretation?
- How should different sources of information be weighed?

4. Expected Response

Is it clear what should happen as a result of using this?

- What actions are expected as a result of using this tool or approach?
- How should interpretation translate into instructional decisions, feedback, or next steps?
- Are expectations clearly defined?

5. Follow-Up and Next Steps

Is follow-up clearly specified as part of use?

- What happens after the initial response?
- How are outcomes revisited, monitored, or adjusted?
- Is follow-up part of the expected use, or left to discretion?

6. Consistency Across Contexts

To what extent would use be consistent across classrooms, teams, or settings?

- Would different individuals use this in similar ways?
- Where might interpretation or response vary?
- What shared reference points support aligned use?

Reading Across Your Audit

As you review your responses, consider:

- Where are expectations for use clearly specified?
- Where are assumptions present or left implicit?
- Where might interpretation differ across individuals or teams?
- Where might responses vary?
- Which aspects of use are most likely to lead to variation in practice?

Key Consideration

A tool, initiative, or approach is more likely to function as intended when decisions related to its use are clearly specified:

- when and where it is used
- what information informs its use
- how information or outputs are interpreted
- what response is expected
- how follow-up occurs

When these are not clear, use is more likely to vary across contexts—even when goals are shared.

How to Use

Use this during planning for next year, when introducing or refining a tool or initiative, in team or leadership discussions, or when examining variation in implementation.

This tool is part of a broader set of *edblogcast* resources focused on responsible, research-informed practice.

It complements the *Decision Readiness Check* and *Decision Mapping Tool*.