



The Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle

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What's the idea?

The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle is a tool for planning, implementing, refining and improving an intervention or change.

What does it mean?

The PDSA Cycle is designed to help you answer three questions:

- » What are you trying to accomplish?
- » How will you know whether the change is an improvement?
- » What changes can you make that will result in improvement? (Langley et al., 2009)

What are the implications for teachers?

There are four steps that are designed to be carried out repeatedly to help answer new questions as the intervention unfolds and develops:

- 1 Plan the intervention.** Consider the context, identify the problem and define the change. Identify the benefits, risks and measures of success. Make predictions of what will happen and design a way to test the change at an appropriate scale, for example, class, year group, phase, school or multi-academy trust
- 2 Do.** Implement the change as planned. Collect data and document problems alongside unexpected observations.

3 Study. Analyse the data and compare it with the predictions and expected outcomes. What are the lessons? Were there any unintended consequences, surprises, successes or failures?

4 Act. Reflect on the results and lessons learned to adjust your aims, improve the intervention, and decide on next steps.

From here, you might consider expanding the changes to elsewhere in your school, or you might choose to abandon or change your approach. Once you have decided, repeat the PDSA cycle.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Bryk AS, Gomez LM, Grunow A and LeMahieu PG (2015) *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- » Langley GJ, Moen R, Nolan KM, Nolan T W, Norman CL and Provost LP (2009) *The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- » Shakman K, Bailey J, and Breslow N (2017) *A Primer for Continuous Improvement in Schools and Districts: Teacher & Leadership Programs*. Available at: https://www.edc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/primer_for_continuous_improvement.pdf (accessed 14 February 2019).