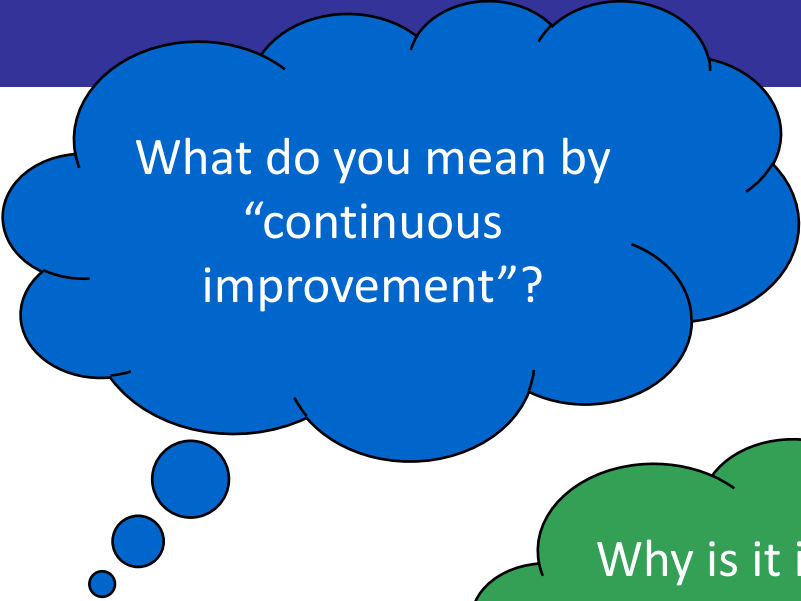



# Evidence-Based Improvement Strategies and Continuous Improvement



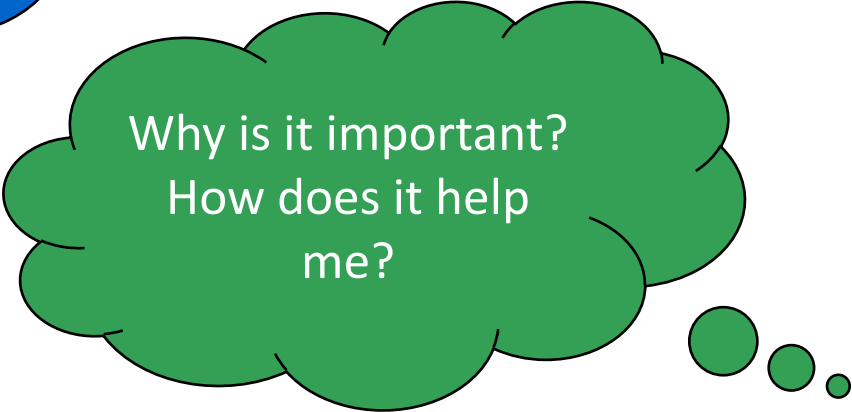
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**  
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent



What do you mean by  
“continuous  
improvement”?



Will this make things  
more complicated?



Why is it important?  
How does it help  
me?

# Evidence-Based Improvement Strategies in the Context of Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement supports ongoing progress toward equity and makes any evidence-based improvement strategy more likely to work for you. This presentation gives an overview of the major phases and components of continuous improvement and connects them to the selection of an evidence-based improvement strategy.

Understanding the entire cycle of continuous improvement can help you

- Connect the selection of an improvement strategy more closely to your greatest needs, so you can have greater impact,
- Take implementation into account, so you can select something more likely to succeed in your situation, and
- See and build on the progress you make as you implement changes.

# What makes a good improvement strategy?

“Evidence-based improvement strategies” are strategies, practices, or programs (referred to more broadly in ESSA as “interventions”) that have solid evidence to show that they produce results and improve outcomes.

A good improvement strategy has three basic characteristics:

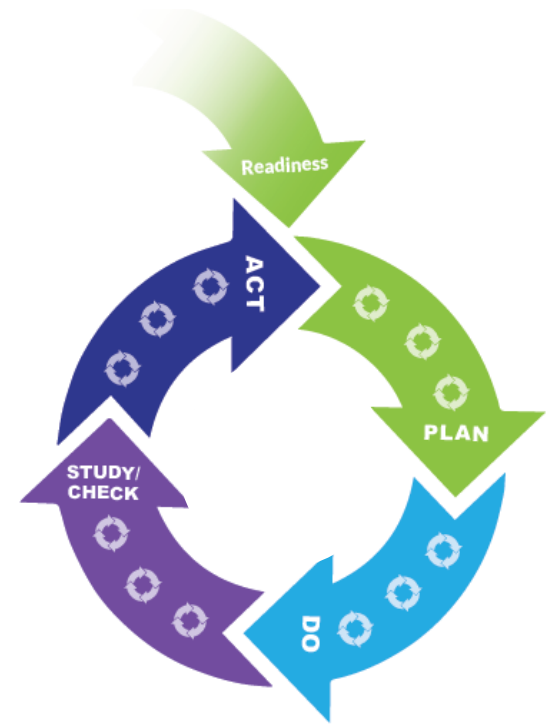
1. It's backed by evidence.
2. It targets your real needs.
3. It's learnable, teachable, and doable in your real world.

This presentation focuses on numbers 2 and 3.

# What Does Continuous Improvement Involve?

There are many continuous improvement frameworks. The DPI uses a 5-phase model: Readiness, Plan, Do, Study/Check, and Act. A detailed rubric for this model is available on the DPI's [Continuous Improvement website](#).

As we go through a basic description of each phase, keep in mind that ***the overarching goal of each phase is to help you make changes that have the greatest possible impact on student outcomes so you can close gaps.***



# Continuous Improvement: Readiness

Readiness is something you examine and strengthen at the beginning and then throughout the improvement cycle. This ensures that you have the systems, processes, and relationships you need to succeed.

Three important components of readiness are

- A strong and representative implementation team,
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement,
- Mission, vision, and values grounded in equity, and
- Systems to support strategic use of data.



# Continuous Improvement: Readiness Leadership Team

A strong team to lead continuous improvement is essential. To function well, they need collaboration skills and appropriate supports for meetings, communication, and online collaboration.

A diverse and representative team that includes members who can genuinely represent the interests of students from historically marginalized groups has an advantage. A truly representative team is able to

- Understand the greatest student needs in a detailed and personal way and understand their cultural context,
- Select strategies that respond to those needs and that families and communities will support, and
- Engage throughout the process and help engage others.



# Continuous Improvement: Readiness Stakeholder Engagement

Actively cultivating respectful and mutual relationships with parents and community members in historically marginalized groups before assembling your improvement team will give you a greater pool of engaged individuals from which to recruit.

Approaching engagement with an asset-based mindset is critical. The participation of individuals who have not typically engaged will only increase your ability to understand and address student needs. Families are students' first and lifelong teachers and crucial partners in their children's education.





# Continuous Improvement: Readiness

## Mission, Vision, Values

Common commitment is another key to success.

- Make sure your mission, vision, and values are grounded in equity.
- Actively and regularly reflect on practices and systems in light of these shared values and commitments.

This will help you keep equity in the center of your improvement efforts, including your selection of an evidence-based improvement strategy.



# Continuous Improvement: Readiness Data Systems

Continuous improvement relies on accurate data for

- Identifying resource inequities,
- Determining needs and root causes,
- Monitoring how fully and faithfully a new practice is being implemented, and
- Seeing if your efforts are producing the outcomes you want.

Take steps to make sure you can protect student data, and make sure your systems can support data analysis. This will help the entire improvement cycle go more smoothly.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

The Plan phase includes much more than creating a plan—in fact, that’s the very last part. The steps that come before ensure your plan is strategic and will move you toward greater equity. They include

- Assessing your current situation with a needs assessment and root cause analysis, identification of resource inequities, and an initiative inventory,
- Clarifying your priorities and setting goals,
- Investigating and selecting an evidence based practice that targets your greatest needs, and
- Creating an improvement plan to implement the selected improvement strategy.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Stakeholder Engagement

The engagement of stakeholders in the planning phase helps you be more strategic. For schools identified under ESSA, particular stakeholders are mandated.

Stakeholders can provide more and better data—beyond the numbers—to help you understand student needs. They can help you set goals that will move the needle and strategies that are workable.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Needs Assessment & Root Cause Analysis

The first step in planning for change is to understand where you are. To understand the root causes of equity issues, it's necessary to look at

- Student data on achievement, engagement, and perceptions of culture/climate,
- Data about your educational practices, including walk-through and fidelity data and staff feedback

Analysis tools available in WISE can help you sift all this data and identify the practices that are creating barriers to achievement.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Clarifying Priorities and Setting Goals

As you clarify your priorities, two more steps are crucial:

- Taking an inventory of all your current initiatives, looking for anything that might impede improvement efforts, and
- Identifying resource allocation inequities, looking at both material and human resources.

Preparing the way for change doesn't just involve doing something extra. It can also involve doing something differently, or even stopping doing something.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Clarifying Priorities and Setting Goals

As you set goals, it's important to focus on the greatest needs rather than on what would be easiest. Remember your shared vision as you

- Identify the outcome that you want to focus on,
- Reflect on the leadership and instructional practices that are contributing to it, and
- Set a specific improvement goal that's ambitious, as well as achievable within your circumstances.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Evidence-Based Improvement Strategy

The steps in the process up to this point support you to select an improvement strategy that meets the second criterion in the list mentioned earlier:

1. It's backed by evidence.
2. **It targets your real needs.**
3. It's learnable, teachable, and doable in your real world.

Even though the rest of the continuous improvement cycle happens after making your strategy selection, understanding these later actions and phases will help you select a strategy that also meets the third criterion.





# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Drafting the Plan

A good implementation has several key ingredients. Among them are

- Supports for all involved in implementation, including professional learning and linked teams,
- Monitoring to ensure the strategy is implemented fully and faithfully, with a schedule of checkpoints that create smaller improvement cycles within the larger one,
- Communication with and engagement of stakeholders,
- A step-by-step list of actions, with responsible parties and timelines, and
- Appropriate resource allocation.



# Continuous Improvement: Plan

## Drafting the Plan

Change can be difficult. Keep in mind that missteps and frustrations are to be expected, and think about creating protocols around mistakes and unexpected results.

Plan to make the most of your rapid improvement cycles within the larger cycle. Monitoring data won't always be positive, but it will help you make adjustments that can mean the difference between long-term success and failure.

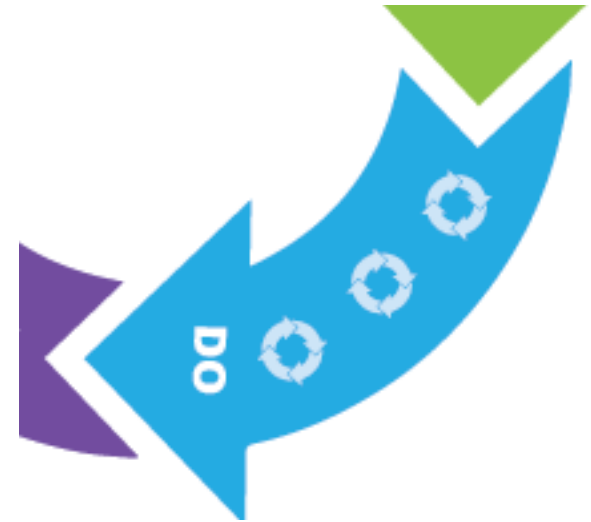


# Continuous Improvement: Do Implementation and Monitoring

During the Do phase your plan comes to life. Use improvement cycles to implement and monitor the plan, periodically analyzing fidelity and outcome data and making any necessary mid-course corrections.

The Do phase also includes

- Implementing any necessary policy, process, and resource changes to support your plan,
- Making sure the individuals involved get the appropriate professional learning and have collaborative structures in place for ongoing support,
- Ensuring the improvement team remains engaged, and
- Ensuring stakeholders are kept informed and involved.

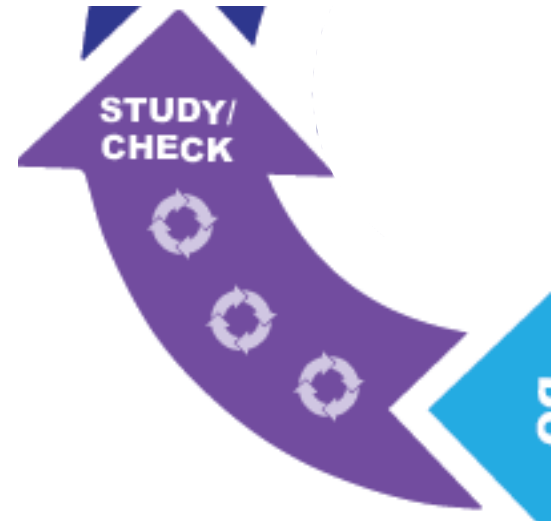


# Continuous Improvement: Study

While monitoring involves regular examination and immediate use of data, the Study phase involves reflection on a larger scale. Regular review of implementation overall and the impact of the change on educator practice and student outcomes supports longer-term progress.

As you look at both student outcome data and educator practice data, you may identify unintended consequences on equity that need further action. You may notice Readiness factors that can be improved to support continuous improvement into the future.

Your insights may lead to changes in the plan, changes in next steps, or preparation for scaling up success.



# Continuous Improvement: Act

The Act phase includes the integration of a successful practice into a school or district and taking steps to ensure ongoing improvement into the future.

The process of integrating a successful practice involves a cycle of continuous improvement just like the initial implementation. It includes creating a plan with specific goals, professional learning, and monitoring.

While sustainable improvement practices should be built into your plan from the beginning, periodically reflecting on new learning and using it to improve practices and systems is also important.



# Evidence-Based Improvement Strategies in the Context of Continuous Improvement

All five phases of continuous improvement are useful to keep in mind when selecting an evidence-based improvement strategy that meets these three common-sense criteria:

1. It's backed by evidence.
2. It targets your real needs.
3. It's learnable, teachable, and doable in your real world.

It's all about your success. With limited resources, it's important to take the time to select something that will work for your situation and help all your students succeed.

Continuous improvement is on your side, and the DPI's [Continuous Improvement website](#) provides excellent resources to support your efforts.

