

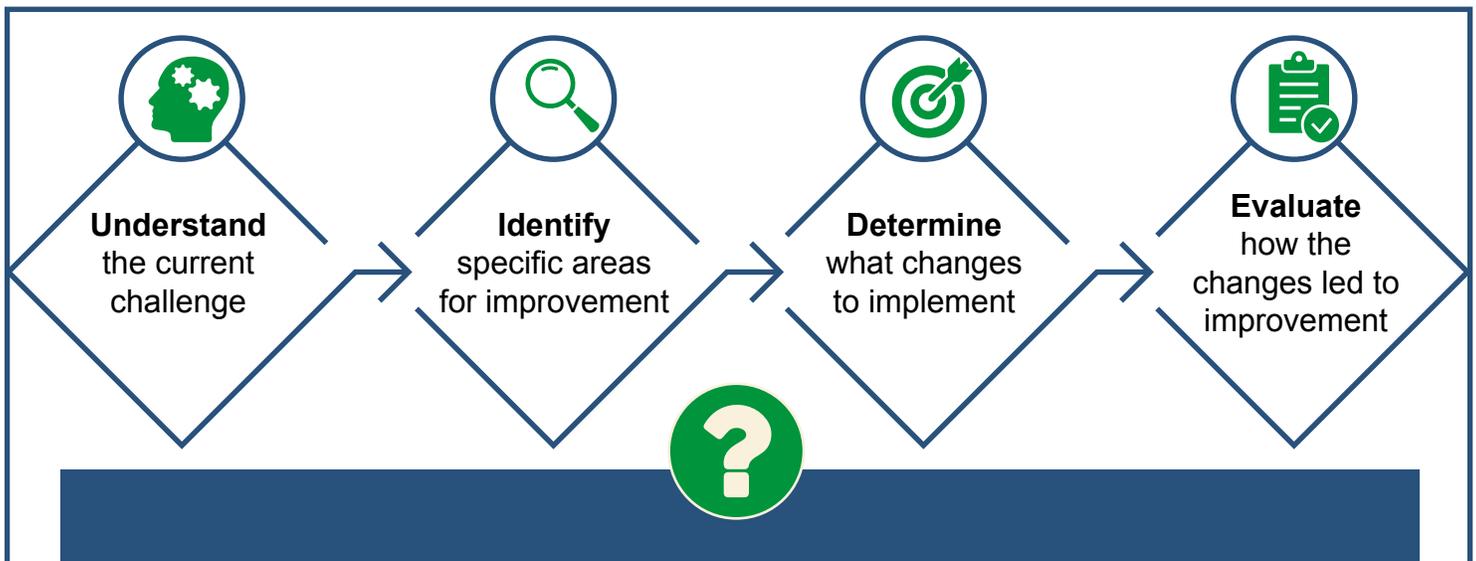
Using Improvement Cycles to Promote Equitable Instructional Practices: Oklahoma Excel



The many roles educators take on during the school day can make it difficult for them to identify and implement evidence-based practices that work in their classroom or school. **Continuous improvement, particularly through rapid research cycles, is one way of choosing, testing, and adjusting practices in “real time.”** [Oklahoma Excel](#) is a yearlong professional development program designed to support equitable and innovative teaching and learning. Oklahoma Excel enables districts to use **Title II, Part A**, and **Title IV, Part A** funds to try, test, and refine research-based instructional practices using **Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)** cycles.

PLAN-DO-STUDY-ACT

PDSA is a process used in improvement research to innovate, test, review, and revise improvement strategies.¹ PDSA cycles originally were developed for industry and health care to test and pilot innovations and interventions.² Educators and researchers apply PDSA cycles as part of continuous improvement³ using four principles⁴ and three guiding questions.⁵



What specifically are we trying to accomplish?

What change might we introduce and why?

How will we know a change is actually an improvement?

OKLAHOMA EXCEL

Oklahoma Excel is the central pillar of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) **Champions of Excellence** initiative to provide students with a well-rounded education in safe and healthy schools. Through Oklahoma Excel, participants engage in networked improvement communities (NICs) and PDSA cycles to implement and refine practices.⁶ Teachers, leaders, and schools receive tailored professional learning, coaching, resources, and tools through this program to make advancements using PDSA cycles towards **safe and healthy schools**, and in **core subject areas** outlined in OSDE's Programs of Excellence rubrics.

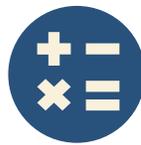
The Programs of Excellence rubrics include the following focal areas:



Science



English language arts



Mathematics



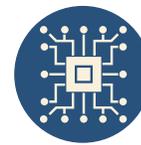
Social studies



World languages



Safe and healthy schools



Computer science

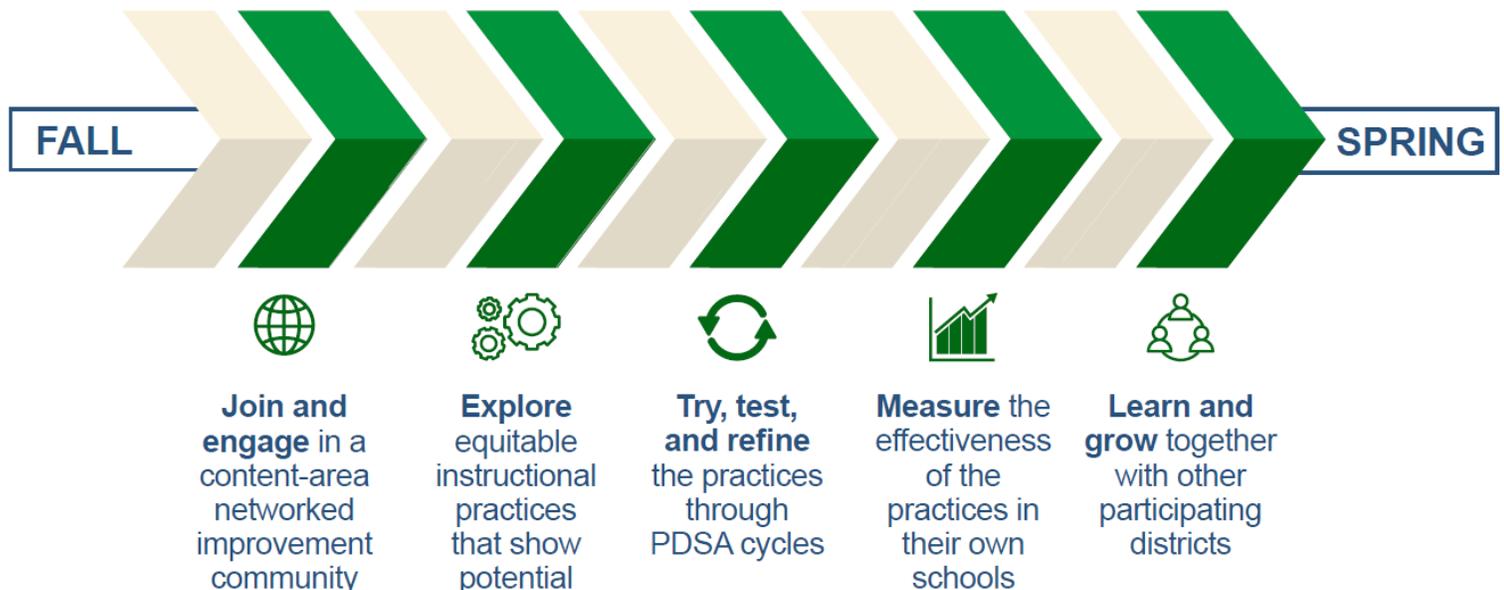


Fine arts

Through the **Southwest Networked Improvement Communities Research Partnership (SWNIC)**, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest provides OSDE staff with in-depth coaching and consultation to establish, pilot, and sustain Oklahoma Excel.

Annual Process for Oklahoma Excel District/School Teams

(Improvement Fellow and 3–5 teachers)



By mid-2020, REL Southwest and OSDE will have achieved the following together:

- **3 cohorts of NICs** conducting multiple PDSA cycles to test instructional practices
- **20 district teams** testing change ideas related to the following:



Safe and healthy schools (4 teams)



Mathematics (6 teams)



Science (10 teams)



Social studies (3 teams)



English language arts (7 teams)

- **29 Improvement Fellows** — teachers or instructional leaders who receive improvement science training, serve as point persons for their NIC teams, and provide leadership, improvement science expertise, and project management
- **137 teachers** collaborating in NICs who pursue innovative, ambitious, and equitable instruction and teach 2,969 students in total

LEARN MORE

Explore how Oklahoma Excel and the Champions of Excellence initiative can benefit your district:

- **Oklahoma Excel:** <https://sde.ok.gov/oklahoma-excel>
- **Champions of Excellence:** <https://sde.ok.gov/championexcellence>
- **REL Southwest Networked Improvement Communities Research Partnership:** <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/partnerships/swnic.aspx>



REFERENCES

- ¹ Langley, G. J., Nolan, K. M., Nolan, T. W., Norman, C. L., & Provost, L. P. (2009). *The improvement guide: A practical approach to enhancing organizational performance* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/Publications/ImprovementGuidePracticalApproachEnhancingOrganizationalPerformance.aspx>
- ² LeMahieu, P. G., Nordstrum, L. E., & Greco, P. (2017). Lean for education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 25(1), 74–90.
- ³ Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., & Grunow, A. (2011). Getting ideas into action: Building networked improvement communities in education. In M. T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Frontiers in sociology of education* (pp. 127–162). New York, NY: Springer. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED517575>
- ⁴ Langley et al., 2019
- ⁵ Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED568744>
- ⁶ Proger, A. R., Bhatt, M. P., Cirks, V., & Gurke, D. (2017). *Establishing and sustaining networked improvement communities: Lessons from Michigan and Minnesota* (What's Happening Report, REL 2017–264). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED573419>



4700 Mueller Boulevard | Austin, TX 78723 | 800.476.6861 | relsouthwest@air.org
Twitter: @RELSouthwest | <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/default.aspx>

DISCLAIMER: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest is part of a network of 10 RELs funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Each REL serves a designated region of the country and helps states and districts use data and research to address policy and practice issues with the goal of improving student outcomes.

This work was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under contract 91990018C0002, administered by the American Institutes for Research. The content of the infographic does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.