

Overview of District Public's Five-Session Inquiry Series

We think inquiry projects in schools often don't realize their potential because...

- There's too much analysis and planning, not enough trying things out.
- Instructional changes aren't small enough to implement and revise rapidly.
- The inquiry team is not clear about what they're implementing and why.
- No data is collected, so the conversation never moves beyond generalities.

In District Public's inquiry process, teachers collect data right from the beginning, recording observations in real time about how students respond to instruction. These observations power a feedback cycle that helps the team get increasingly precise about the strategy they're testing and its impact on students.

We recommend a minimum of five sessions for our inquiry series, spaced 2-3 weeks apart. Additional sessions will allow the inquiry team to tackle further aspects of the problem they've selected.

Session 1: Exploring the problem area

We begin with a curated data analysis focused on the school's priorities. This analysis grounds a discussion of gaps between instruction and learning and guides the inquiry team to choose a focus area for improvement.

- After session 1, teachers make informal observations of students to gain insight into the focus area.

Session 2: Selecting a change idea

A custom driver diagram reflects the team's initial thoughts about how to address the problem chosen. Using this framework, the team reflects on their informal observations and selects an instructional strategy to try.

- After session 2, teachers try out the selected change idea and observe how it lands with students.

Session 3: Formalizing the feedback cycle

Based on initial experiences with the change idea, ambiguities about implementation are clarified. The team agrees on what data to collect and teachers make concrete predictions about how implementation will go.

- After session 3, teachers implement the clarified change idea and record observations that can be compared to their predictions.

Session 4: Revising the change idea

The team compares the data collected to predictions and refines the change idea based on what's learned. Teachers make a second round of predictions about how students will respond to the revised change idea.

- After session 4, teachers implement the revised change idea and record observations that can be compared to their predictions.

Session 5: Looking toward next steps

The team reviews the data collected to identify "best practice" for the instructional strategy they've been testing. To wrap up, the team reviews the steps and tools of the inquiry process and returns to the driver diagram to crystalize what has been learned and discuss additional ways to tackle the overall problem.

- After session 5, teachers will have experience and tools to continue inquiry independently.