



## TRANSCRIPT

# Facilitating Improvement Professional Learning Series

## NARRATOR

Since 2017, the Regional Educational Laboratory West, or REL West, at WestEd has partnered with the Washoe County School District. Together, we've explored how the district could leverage continuous improvement methods to facilitate professional learning and increase achievement in literacy. We focused on three key components: teacher collaboration, inquiry cycles, and the use of data to document improvement and learning. The goal of this work was to improve Tier 1 instruction using systematic, collaborative, job-embedded continuous improvement structures and processes. To do this, we developed a series of professional learning modules. They're designed to support educational leaders—principals, coaches, and teacher-leaders—as they engage with teachers in this type of professional learning. The purpose of the modules is to build staff capacity, so that they in turn can support groups of teachers in reflecting on and improving their instruction. The professional learning series includes eight two-hour modules for teams of educators to complete together.

Before previewing the modules on continuous improvement cycles, let's consider how schools and districts traditionally approach a problem. First, the problem is identified. Then, someone is assigned the responsibility of addressing the problem. That person then forms a team or committee. The team studies the problem and creates an action plan over time. The plan is rolled out for implementation across the district. The expected result is improved outcomes. However, what often happens is the plan rolls out and failures occur that we don't fully understand. Sometimes as a result, we scrap the entire effort and start the process all over again, and this can lead to initiative fatigue.

This happens in teaching as well. Teachers plan for instruction and carry out lessons, but rarely have time along the way to reflect on what went well, and what was challenging, and to identify areas for improvement. We developed the teacher inquiry cycle to introduce a disciplined approach to improving instruction and learning together. First, school teams identify a focus area for improvement. Then, teacher teams collect data to understand the problems and gaps in their own classrooms, and to generate some reasons why these gaps arise. After this initial data gathering, teams begin to generate change ideas to test in their classrooms. They collect simple, practical classroom data to assess the impact. Then, groups gather again to discuss what they learned. They assess whether their change idea worked and determine next steps. They may adopt, adapt, or abandon the idea. The process often includes some tweaking of the change idea and testing it again.

Four key improvement questions guide this collaborative work. What are our priority needs? What is the problem we are trying to solve? What change might we introduce and why? And how can we test and build confidence that those changes actually make a difference? Each of the eight professional learning modules revisits the guiding improvement questions and focuses on

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a specific topic. The modules include slide decks, activities, and reading and action period assignments. Together, they'll provide you with the materials you need to build leaders' capacity to facilitate teacher learning, support continuous improvement routines to improve instruction, and create a culture of collaboration and organizational learning. The first module introduces the series. The second module focuses on systems change. The third module supports the facilitation of teams. And the fourth module explores problem identification and needs assessment. The next two modules dive into how to support teams in investigating root causes of problems and determining ideas for change. The last two modules introduce the teacher inquiry cycle and how to measure the results of improvements.

We've also created three videos to complement this professional learning series. The first video supports Module 2, focusing on improving school systems and introduces the teacher inquiry cycle. The second video complements Module 6 with its focus on change ideas and developing prototypes to improve instruction. The third video, a learning orientation towards improvement, tells the story of a third-grade team in Washoe County and could be shown at the beginning or end of the series. It provides a concrete example of improvement in action.

We would love to hear how you use the modules in the videos. Please contact us at [relwest@wested.org](mailto:relwest@wested.org). To access this video and related resources, visit the REL West website.