

# Continuous Improvement: Glossary of Terms

## Activity:

The activities we do in the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle that must be accomplished to achieve our goals (*Activities to Ensure Mastery: Title I Implementation Guide, 2019*<sup>1</sup>)

## Benchmark (Periodic/Interim) Assessments:

Assessments used to gather data several times a year and monitor students' progress with respect to expected (benchmark) performance, over time.

## Benchmarks:

Content or developmental standards (levels, cut scores, targets, etc.) that describe sequences of growth that can be monitored over time. Usually measured three times per year (fall, winter, spring).

## Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA):

A formal process for determining gaps between current conditions and desired outcomes. Needs assessments are used to identify goals for continuous improvement.

## Continuous Improvement:

An ongoing process of improving school practice based on assessed needs and informed by data. Often this process includes rapid learning cycles (i.e. Plan-Do-Study-Act).

## Data:

Most schools and LEAs collect four types of data (Bernhardt, 2003<sup>2</sup>)

### Demographic Data

Includes enrollment rates, retention rates, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, income, graduation and dropout rates.

### Student Outcomes Data

Includes results of state and local assessments, curriculum-based measures, demonstrations of proficiency, formative measures, behavior and social-emotional health.

---

<sup>1</sup> Title I Implementation Guide and FAQ for the Consolidated School Improvement Plan Template. Updated April 24, 2019, by Title I, Part A, OSSI/OSPI. Retrieved from:

<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/ossi/schoolimprovement/pubdocs/implementationguideandfaq-consolidatedschoolimprovementplan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Bernhardt, V.L. (2003). Using Data to improve student achievement. *Educational Leadership*. 60(5), 26-30



## School Process Data

Includes measures of instructional practices, continuous improvement, curriculum alignment, professional learning, staff evaluation, resource availability, technology integration and program effectiveness.

## Perceptual Data

Includes climates surveys, communication data, parent and community involvement data and focus groups.

## Data-Based Decision Making:

The ongoing process of analyzing and evaluating student data to inform educational decisions, including, but not limited to, approaches in instruction, intervention, allocation of resources, development of policy, movement within a multi-level system, and disability identification.

## Educational Equity:

Each child receives what they need to develop to their full social and academic potential.

## High-Leverage Activity:

A high-leverage activity is specific and actionable, measurable, grounded in evidence-base research, and designed to help achieve a goal.

## Improvement Science:

The science of determining which improvement strategies work best using evidence-based practices. See [The Carnegie Foundation's site](#).

## Measures:

### Balancing Measures:

Measures used to test for unintended consequences of improvements (IHI, 2017<sup>3</sup>)

Example: A new approach to math instruction might lead to improved math outcomes, but increased planning demands could lead to an undesired shift in other teaching practices. When working to improve one process or practice, it is important to be mindful of the complex nature of your school or LEA and to monitor the impact of change ideas across the entire system.

### Outcome Measure:

The measure of the intended result of your change idea.

### Leading Outcome Measures:

Short-term formative assessments (e.g., local assessment data, checklists, rubrics)

### Lagging Outcome Measures:

---

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2017). Science of improvement: Establishing measures. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ihl.org/education/ihlopenschool/courses/documents/practicumdocuments/learnerhandbook.pdf>

Long-term summative assessments (e.g. end of year assessment data-WSIF)

### **Process Measures:**

The measure used to determine whether the successful implementation of a change idea is occurring before outcomes are known. These strategies can be monitored formatively and approaches to change one can be revised quickly (IHI, 2017).

*Example: A process measure for implementing an instructional strategy might include a protocol checklist after each class, teacher survey/interview, or coaching feedback logs.*

### **Outcomes/Summative Assessment:**

Assessments that help teachers to evaluate and verify learning over time and may aid teachers in planning future instruction, informing classroom decisions (i.e., potential use of groupings), evaluating curricular changes, and making school wide decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.

### **Progress Monitoring:**

Data used to frequently check student progress towards success. Progress monitoring is used to assess students' academic or behavioral performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring procedures can be used with individual students or an entire class.

### **SMARTIE Goal:**

Goals for improvement should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timebound, inclusive, and equitable in describing what will be improved, by how much, by when, and for what/whom.