## Plan, Do, Study, Act Cycles in the Field
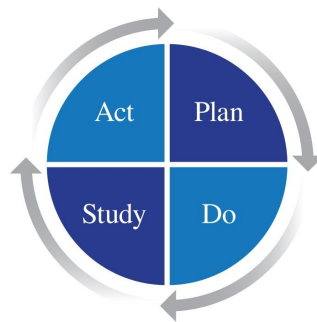
The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has partnered with SISEP for 13 years. While MDE has implemented several evidence-based practices (EBPs) throughout their partnership with SISEP, their State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) focuses on implementing Check & Connect, an EBP for monitoring and mentoring students who show signs of disengaging. A purveyor of this practice, the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, has assisted the department in improving graduation rates for Black and Indigenous students with disabilities. Minnesota has used Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Cycles iteratively to address challenges to achieve full implementation of Check & Connect through sustained focus and application improving graduation rates in four large districts.

### PDSA Cycles

In case you missed it, check out our April eNote - Intro to PDSA Cycles for an overview of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles.



## PDSA Cycles in Action

### Using PDSA Cycles with Check & Connect

PDSA Cycles are inherently built into Minnesota's SSIP to monitor progress

## CHECK & CONNECT

at the state, district, and school level over time. The use of PDSA Cycles for Check & Connect began quickly. PDSA Cycles were used at multiple levels with multiple sources of data. For example, a baseline District Capacity Assessment (DCA) was used as a starting point for each district to begin action planning. This was repeated annually to adjust their individual district-level plans. Repeated use of the PDSA Cycles provided multiple opportunities for feedback and adjustments, which kept momentum going to sustain implementation.

Through each stage, the MDE team continued to use PDSA Cycles. For example, while the purveyor provided options for measuring fidelity, MDE and the purveyor used implementation data to standardize and improve the fidelity measure. This tool provided fidelity data for frequent cycles to adjust coaching and training, strengthening the quality of implementation. The MDE team simultaneously applied PDSA Cycles to create a data sheet showing progress in reaching students and indicating the districts' readiness to scale up the use of the EBP to more schools. The data reaffirmed with the districts that they were increasing their ability to serve the targeted group of students with Check & Connect, and schools were able to make adjustments to staffing for increased services.

## *PDSA Cycles & Equity*

One critical step that the Minnesota Department of Education did was to prioritize equity from the start. Analyzing statewide graduation data, the team discovered significantly lower graduation rates for Black and Indigenous students with disabilities. Rather than implementing Check & Connect universally, the team identified districts that served significant numbers of these students and worked with each district team to use PDSA Cycles to ensure the district teams delivered the EBP to these specific students with fidelity. This focus was revisited as part of ongoing implementation throughout all stages.

> **Effective implementation is often not equitable for all student groups unless we are intentionally paying attention to it… and, the most important PDSA cycle is the second one.**
>
> Eric Kloos, Minnesota Department of Education, Assistant Director of Special Education

The Minnesota Department of Education used PDSA Cycles to remove barriers and improve the implementation of Check & Connect to increase graduation rates. Continuous use of data to adjust and celebrate accomplishments provides momentum. In addition, having equity at the core of the work supports a socially relevant impact.

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## *To Learn More:*

- AI Hub Interactive Lesson 6: The PDSA Cycle
- AI Hub Module 5: Improvement Cycles
- PDSA Planning Template

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## *Other Resources:*

- Check & Connect
- Minnesota Department of Education

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## *New From SISEP:*

SISEP now has a podcast - **Implementation Science for Educators**! Listen each week for a quick Implementation Science tip.

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