

Improvement Science	Appreciative Inquiry	Design Thinking
Are you trying to solve a well-defined problem?	Is your goal to explore opportunities and possibilities for growth based on what is already working well?	Is the problem you are trying to solve ambiguous or ill-defined , with a clear solution or path forward? Is there a need to reframe the problem from the perspective of the learner or innovate in an entirely new direction?
1. Reflection on Nature of the Problem/Goal for my school/district:		
Works well for continuous improvement in areas where small, controlled changes are tested and refined through iterative cycles like the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model. The focus is on measurable, data-driven outcomes .	Appropriate when change efforts should be positively framed and aimed at unlocking potential by focusing on strengths . Engages people through positive conversations, celebrates achievements, and builds motivation by highlighting successes. Ideal for energizing and engaging teams by focusing on "what works" and creating a compelling vision of the future.	Best for projects where empathy with the user or stakeholder is key, and the change needs to come from understanding and solving real-world needs through iterative prototyping and testing. Change requires creativity, iteration, and experimentation , especially with a strong human-centered focus
2. Reflection on Desired Approach to Change:		
Suitable when the problem is well-defined , and the solution requires optimization or refinement rather than breakthrough innovation	Useful when the goal is to explore opportunities and possibilities , even if the exact nature of the problem is not fully clear	Best used when the problem is ambiguous or ill-defined , and the activator doesn't have a clear solution or path forward. Offers the chance to reframe the problem from the perspective of the user or innovate in an entirely new direction
3. Reflection on Level of Certainty or Ambiguity in the Goal/Problem:		
Key stakeholders (e.g., staff, management) engaged in measuring, testing, and evaluating improvements.	All stakeholders actively participate at all levels in highly inclusive experiences, involving everyone in sharing positive stories and imagining a shared future.	Stakeholder involvement is critical, especially in the form of empathy and feedback loops with those impacted by the change - students, parents, staff, community
4. Reflection on Stakeholder Involvement and Participation:		
Improves what already exists in a systematic way, often through small, measurable changes .	Change is more about cultural transformation or motivating people through positive, strength-based approaches that create an aspirational vision	Creates something new —whether that's an outcome, service, system, or process. It's for innovation and creative problem-solving , where new insights and ideas need to be generated from a learner-centered perspective.
5. Reflection on Type of Change/Innovation Needed:		
Achieves specific, measurable improvements through iterative testing and refinement	Leads to increased engagement, morale, and a sense of collective ownership of the change	Results in a novel, human-centered solution to a problem. This might be a new outcome, service, or experience that deeply resonates with users because it was developed through empathy, iteration, and testing.
6. Reflection on Desired Outcomes:		