Activity: Plan and Run a Pilot

Plan to pilot your prototype and measure results on a small scale

Framing

Once you have a prototype developed, it is time to see how it works in the real world by running a pilot, or a small test.

Pilots should be small and fast enough to ensure that any negative outcome is minimally felt. This means picking one school, a few classrooms, or even a small group of students to try the prototype. Even a small test requires planning, though – consider all of the prep work, materials, and communication required.

Pilots are only successful if you learn from them. Planning to assess impact against clear goals is vital. This can include standard measures (e.g., student proficiency on an exit ticket, a student engagement survey), though you may also find it powerful to look for what IDEO calls "uncommon measures." Consider, for example, measuring increases in classroom noise level or student tardiness to a next class as positive indicators of student engagement in a class.

Ensuring Equity & Resiliency

Equity looks like testing your prototype with the students you most seek to benefit through your design work so that you can get direct feedback. It also looks like ensuring that your measurements accurately assess changes (for example, shifts in student behavior) that will lead towards more equitable outcomes.

Resiliency looks like testing your prototype in a few different contexts (remembering to keep it small!). This will help you assess whether the prototype is flexible enough to work with different teachers, students, or even grades and subjects.

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Steps to Implementation

Suggested time: 2 hours

Prepare to Pilot

1. Gather your team in a room (in-person or virtual) with access to the Plan to Pilot template (*see Appendix: Workpages*) and the Project Plan template (*see Appendix: Workpages*); make sure your team has built a clear prototype for the pilot.

    a. Discuss and document the following questions in the "Plan" section of the Plan to Pilot template.

2. Once you have aligned on the high-level plan to pilot, get tactical. Use the project planning template to identify specific activities, owners, and timelines for the next steps to prepare for and conduct your pilot.

3. Once your plan to pilot (and associated project plan) are fully drafted, determine as a team what meeting and/or communications structure you will use to keep the plan in motion.

    a. For example, many teams like to schedule a weekly check-in to ensure that the work to prepare for and conduct the pilot is "on track" and that all people involved in the work collaborate closely.

Run Pilot

4. When the time comes to launch your pilot, be sure to collect data aligned to your Plan to Pilot. Use the "Document" section to record this data, including any benchmark or pre-pilot data you wish to collect to compare.

5. After the pilot, ask teachers and students to provide feedback using the Question Guide from your Plan to Pilot and taking detailed notes. Be mindful of power dynamics that might be in the room (e.g., students may feel nervous talking to a district administrator). Create an open environment for feedback by:

    a. Reminding participants that the pilot is **designed to be improved**

    b. Indicating that student and teacher **feedback is critical** to that improvement process

    c. Requesting **honest feedback**

    d. **Staying neutral** and resisting any temptation to defend the pilot

    e. Making **real-time adaptations** to dig deeper into topics and/or accommodate the group

6. Collect data from across your design team to keep all of the information in one place (consider using the space provided in the "Plan to Pilot" document). You will need it for the next step: reflecting on your pilot.

This activity was inspired by the "Get Feedback" step of IDEO's Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit.

Cedar Rapids: Student Reflection and Goal-Setting Pilot
To solve their problem, "How might we provide relevant, standards-aligned feedback to students so that every student reaches mastery," the Cedar Rapids team decided to pilot a reflection and goal-setting process with students.

Mastery Charter Schools: Blended, Culturally Responsive Teaching Pilot
To solve their problem, "How might we build a blended learning model that fosters achievement and independence in our high school students," Mastery decided to pilot the integration of ISTE Standards for Students into high school lesson plans.

Monterey Peninsula: Students and Teachers Co-Design Process Pilot
To solve their problem, "How might we increase flexibility and personalization to build a sense of belonging and connection within the context of our labor and policy constraints." Monterey decided to pilot a process to engage students and teachers to design new systems for personalization and connection.

See Appendix: Case Studies for more details

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