



## continuous improvement

### *Spartanburg, S.C.*

## the opportunity

Spartanburg County, S.C., faces a major economic mobility challenge, particularly for Black and Latinx children and families. But the community remains committed to addressing these structural inequities.

StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network member Spartanburg Academic Movement (SAM) supports student success through data, focusing on eliminating barriers created by racism and poverty.

Two of Spartanburg's superintendents turned to SAM to discuss a partnership to improve outcomes. SAM decided to approach this opportunity using continuous improvement, a methodology that began in manufacturing before reaching education and the social sector. To help the community get started, StriveTogether led continuous improvement training and technical assistance for Spartanburg educators in 2018.

Continuous improvement is a science — a problem-solving method that is data-driven and uses tools to make improvement. It's about taking big goals and breaking them down into small, actionable goals, evaluating frequently and course-correcting when necessary.

— Mendy Mossbrook, Director of the Continuous Improvement Institute and the John T. Wardlaw Institute

The result is supported teachers, energized students and better outcomes.



PDSA cycles are completed every five to 10 days to find out what is working well for students and what should be reconsidered.

## continuous improvement method

### PLAN

- Identify a challenge and root cause
- Define a change and practical measure

### STUDY

- Analyze measures / results
- Document insights

### DO

- Conduct the change
- Collect practical measure

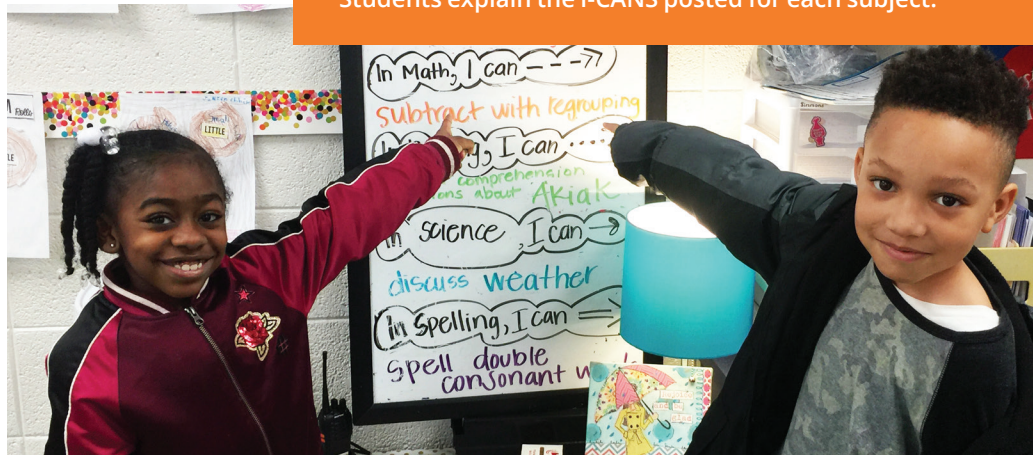
### ACT

- Decide to adopt, abandon, adjust or scale
- Share what you learned and plan next steps

# bringing improvement to the classroom

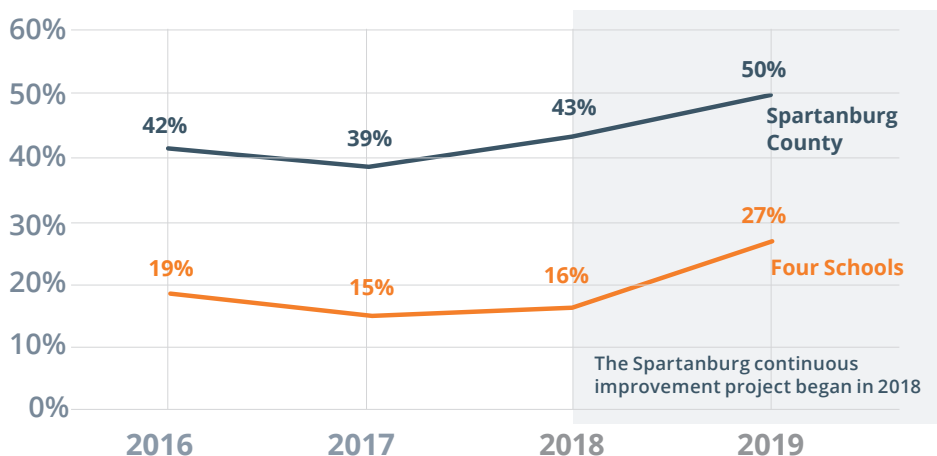
SAM worked closely with StriveTogether to create a plan to implement continuous improvement in select schools. A pilot program called the Four Schools Project began in the 2018 - 2019 school year, focusing on schools where students experienced poverty and disparate outcomes. SAM engaged teachers at these schools, providing coaching to help them use continuous improvement in the classroom.

Students explain the I-CANS posted for each subject.



## third-grade reading proficiency — Spartanburg County vs. Four Schools

the Four Schools Project saw a more than **60% increase** from 2018 - 2019



Their efforts led to measurable progress. Third-grade reading proficiency increased more than 60% in 2019. One of the four schools saw a decrease in discipline referrals from 600 to 700 per year to fewer than 450.

Along with these results, Spartanburg's schools have also seen a shift in culture among teachers, who have embraced the use of data to understand progress and places for improvement.

## looking to the future

This success is spreading across the community. Teachers from all districts are receiving training to bring this approach to their classrooms. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's difficult to tell what's ahead for Spartanburg County. But for Cheryl Broadnax, StriveTogether's senior director of district improvement, this situation demonstrates the power of continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement is a journey taken one step at a time. It's not a long-term plan — and that's exactly why a situation like COVID-19 doesn't throw us off our game. Continuous improvement allows us to write our own journey, and we can pivot and return when we are ready.

— Cheryl Broadnax, StriveTogether's architect of continuous improvement for education systems