

Step One: Predict

The purpose: To activate interest and bring out our prior knowledge, preconceptions, and assumptions regarding the data with which we are about to work. Prediction allows dialogue participants to share the frame of reference through which they view the world and lays the foundation for collaborative inquiry.

The steps include:

1. Clarify the questions that can be answered by the data
2. Make predictions about data
3. Identify assumptions behind each prediction

Prediction Sentence Starters:

I predict . . . I expect to see . . . I anticipate . . .

Assumption Questions:

Why did I make that prediction?

What is the thinking behind my prediction?

What do I know that leads me to make that prediction?

What experiences do I have that are consistent with my prediction?

Step Three: Explain

The Purpose: Generate theories of causation, keeping multiple voices in the dialogue. Deepen thinking to get to the best explanations and identify additional data to use to validate the best theories.

The steps include:

1. Generate questions about observations
2. Brainstorm explanations
3. Categorize/classify brainstormed explanations
4. Narrow (based on criteria)
5. Prioritize
6. Get to root causes
7. Validate with other data

Guiding Questions:

- What explains our observations about our data? What might have caused the patterns we see in the data?
- Is this our best thinking? How can we narrow our explanations?
- What additional data sources will we explore to validate our explanation?

Step Two: Explore

The purpose: Generate priority observations or fact statements about the data that reflect the best thinking of the group.

The steps include:

1. Interact with the data (highlighting, creating graphical representations, reorganizing)
2. Look for patterns, trends, things that pop out
3. Brainstorm a list of facts (observations)
4. Prioritize observations
5. Turn observations into priority needs

Avoid: Statements that use the word “because” or that attempt to identify the causes of data trends.

Sentence starters:

It appears . . . I see that . . . It seems . . . The data shows . . .

Step Four: Take Action

The Purpose: Prepare to take action based on the data. The critical steps include:

1. Change priority needs into goals
2. State the goals as SMART Goals
3. Determine what will indicate that the problem has been solved or the goal(s) have been met.
4. Identify strategies and action steps that will eliminate or correct the “root cause(s)” of the problem
5. Identify what data to track over time to determine if action steps are having the desired effect

Cautions

Make sure that there is a direct causal link between the goal or solution and the action steps that are being taken. Clearly define what success looks like and measure it. Don't be afraid to change course if action steps are not having the desired effect.