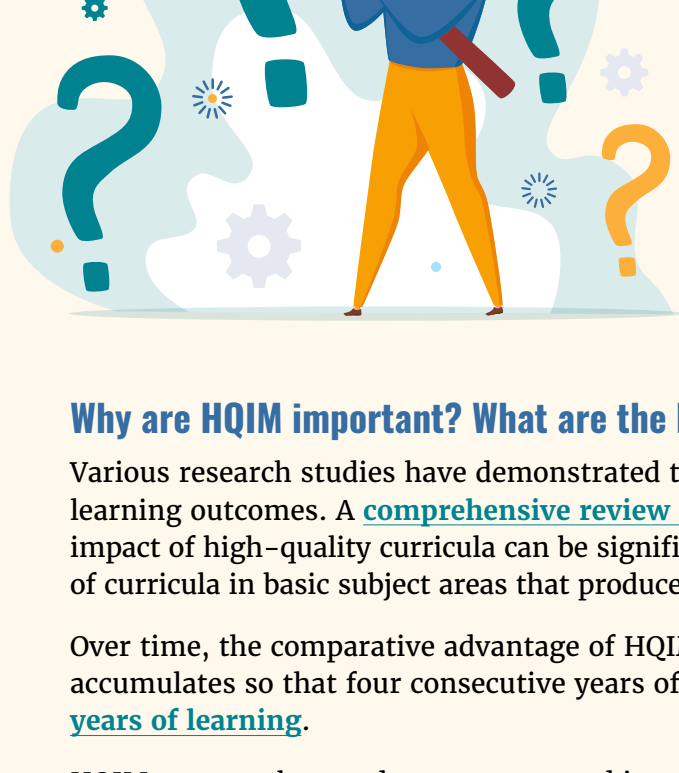


# Guide to the Implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)



## What are HQIM?

While there are many variations in how state agencies define HQIM, the most common definitions include materials that:

- Align to academic standards and have clear learning outcomes
- Reflect **evidence-based practices**
- Are content rich
- Have cultural and linguistic relevance and are free from bias
- Provide a full complement of teacher and student materials

## Why are HQIM important? What are the benefits?

Various research studies have demonstrated the advantages of using HQIM in terms of student learning outcomes. A [comprehensive review of curriculum research](#) noted that, “the cumulative impact of high-quality curricula can be significant.” The What Works Clearinghouse includes studies of curricula in basic subject areas that produce annual gains of 10 to 20 or more percentile points.

Over time, the comparative advantage of HQIM, with even small effect sizes annually (.10), accumulates so that four consecutive years of HQIM can yield the equivalent of four additional [years of learning](#).

HQIM assures that students are engaged in appropriate grade-level assignment, which is critical for achieving mastery of grade-level standards. Without HQIM, research paints a dismal picture. In a study of 1000 lessons and 5000 assignments, [TNTP](#) found that 74% of student time was spent on below grade-level work. While students met demands of the assignments, more than half got As or Bs but demonstrated mastery of grade-level standards only 17% of the time.

## Selection of HQIM

### What criteria are helpful when selecting or evaluating materials to ensure they are high quality?

Professional organizations and state agencies have developed rubrics for rating materials based on specific criteria. Typically, criteria include alignment to learning standards and connection to evidence-based practices.

[EdReports](#) is a national nonprofit organization that works with state education agencies and school systems to rate materials using educator-led review teams and provides online reviews of specific instructional materials. EdReports’ criteria are grounded in alignment with learning standards, depth and coverage of standards, and practical issues associated with usability.

Examples of approaches states have used to define criteria are included in [Signaling and Incentivizing Quality](#), a publication of the High-Quality Materials and Professional Development (IMPD) Network of states, supported by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

### Why is it important to engage teachers in selection of HQIM? What are strategies to do so?

It’s essential to involve end users in the review and selection of HQIM materials. By providing adequate time and guidance, the necessary buy-in from users can serve as the foundation for effective implementation. Here is additional advice from practitioners who have had success with the implementation of new materials:

**Begin by “sharing the why”—acknowledge issues that exist and identify gaps that exist with current materials: Why are new materials needed?**

**Engage a wide range of staff in selection of materials, including teachers, coaches, administrators and specialists.**

“Nearly a quarter of teachers say they have no curriculum-related professional learning at all, and almost a third have access to only 1–5 hours of learning per year.”  
Eric Hirsch, EdReports Executive Director

## Planning for Implementation to Increase Success

### Successful implementation of HQIM depends on:

1. Anticipation of possible barriers
2. Use of a systems approach
3. Aligned professional development and teacher supports
4. Intentional preparation

### What are common mistakes that districts make when implementing HQIM? Why do HQIM sometimes end up “on the shelf” (i.e., fail to be implemented)?

While many districts have adopted HQIM, they are not always implemented well or with fidelity. A recent [article](#) provides common reasons why HQIM use might not be effective or consistent, including:

- Inconsistent communication about why new materials are needed and what current learning gaps are
- Lack of information about what makes materials high quality
- Teachers were not involved in the selection process
- Absence of professional learning about how to use the materials and what instructional strategies and pedagogical approaches are best suited when using them

The seminal [diffusion of innovations](#) research by Everett Rogers identifies factors that can be barriers to the adoption of new materials—those that must be overcome for successful implementation of any innovation. They include:

- New materials do not seem compatible with existing behaviors
- New materials do not seem to constitute an improvement over existing ones
- Perceived risk in switching to new materials (e.g., lower performance, less satisfaction, higher cost)
- Users are reluctant to change traditional ways of operating

### What is the best way to plan for implementation? What are lessons from districts that have had successful experiences?

The Center for American Progress conducted a [study](#) involving five districts across the country, examining their approaches to implementation of HQIM. Tulsa Public Schools noted that not only is professional learning key, districts also need to provide an opportunity for practice, reflection, and feedback. Other lessons learned include:

- Show teachers what implementation looks like in the classroom
- Solicit feedback on an ongoing basis and adjust supports
- Develop a collection of videos to demonstrate implementation for new staff
- Ensure coaches and leaders know what to look for
- Engage all staff, including interventionists, specialists, and support staff, in understanding the use of HQIM

Rogers’ work, cited above, summarizes the research about successful adoption of any type of innovation as five factors:

- Relative advantage (clear statement of “the why”)
- Ability to pilot or try out the new approach
- Opportunity to observe the approach in action
- Compatibility with existing patterns of behavior (the more compatible, the faster the adoption)
- Complexity (hence the importance of professional development and ongoing support)

### How does HQIM connect to other systems and structures of instructional systems (e.g., assessment, standards)? And how can you ensure alignment with these and professional learning?

Selecting quality instructional materials is important but isn’t enough to ensure an equitable education for all students. Successful implementation will demand connections and alignment to all components of the existing system, including professional development, assessments, and teacher evaluation. Research from [American Teacher Panel surveys](#) suggests that teachers use standards-aligned materials at a higher rate in situations where there is a coherent environment for instruction—a systems approach.

### How might implementation of HQIM be phased effectively? What are the benefits of doing so?

School districts need sufficient time and systemic coordination for successful HQIM implementation—a multi-year process in most cases. This journey begins with HQIM adoption and unfolds in phases:

1. **Plan HQIM implementation.** Implementation team(s) and stakeholders engage in HQIM adoption and planning for HQIM implementation, taking key educator roles into consideration across the [implementation phases](#). Identify systemic goals, priorities, messaging, and supports and plan for professional learning.
2. **Support HQIM launch.** Provide a continuum of HQIM professional learning opportunities, preparing faculty for the instructional shifts and collaborative planning. Put supports in place, e.g., coaching, and videos of classroom practice.
3. **Operationalize HQIM for continuous improvement.** Collect data and feedback on implementation and adjust supports as needed for data-based continuous improvements.

Successful implementation of HQIM is an intentional process, allowing time to establish common vocabulary and instructional priorities. Taking a phased approach can build teacher buy-in and support use of improved instructional practices.

### Useful tools for monitoring implementation of HQIM

- [Instruction Partners’ reflective key actions checklist](#)
- [Louisiana’s curriculum implementation scales](#)

### What are the roles and responsibilities of the state education agency (SEA) in the implementation of HQIM?

SEAs—even those in states with strong traditions of local control—can support effective implementation of HQIM at the local level. They can do so by:

- Conducting and publicizing reviews of curricular materials in use in the state
- Creating opportunities for:
  - Districts to pilot or field test new materials and instructional practices, such as through [grants](#)
  - HQIM alignment of state, district, and educator preparation program efforts (i.e., [development of EPP course material on HQIM content and practices](#), etc.)
- Supporting LEAs with tools to conduct [HQIM district needs assessment](#) and [guidance in engaging the local community](#) in selecting HQIM
- [Identifying policies](#) to support LEAs’ selection of HQIM and aligned professional development for implementation of HQIM
- Partnering with education intermediaries (i.e., regional service units) to offer implementation support
- Creating communication channels for sharing experiences (i.e., building networks of users)

### What are the roles and responsibilities of the local education agency (LEA) system leaders in the implementation of HQIM?

A critical role of the LEA is to establish a district-wide vision and a comprehensive, collaborative process that supports the implementation of HQIM with systemic continuous improvement. A recent curriculum study from [Education Elements](#) describes examples from three LEAs and their process of selecting HQIM. In these examples, LEAs focus on the selection of HQIM, prioritizing professional learning and establishing structures for collaborative lesson planning and practice.

LEA system leaders (e.g. superintendents, curriculum directors/coordinators, instructional coaches) can take actions, such as:

- Allotting sufficient time and systemic coordination to put into place effective processes
- Issuing consistent communication about a system-wide vision, why new materials are needed, how they address current learning gaps, and what makes materials high quality
- Providing training in state standards and engaging teachers in materials selection
- Identifying teacher ambassadors or teacher leaders
- Offering guidance to principals on HQIM use and implementation, including messaging, supporting professional learning for teachers, and instructional behaviors aligned to HQIM
- Providing professional learning for teachers using various formats that offer practice, reflection, and feedback opportunities for teachers to learn how to use HQIM, including identifying instruction strategies and pedagogical approaches that are best suited for using the HQIM

### What are the roles and responsibilities of school system leaders in the implementation of HQIM?

Throughout each phase, school system leaders—particularly principals but also coaches and teacher leaders—serve as the school’s HQIM implementation drivers. As the ultimate decision maker, the principal ensures that:

- HQIM is distributed in a timely fashion
- Key communications on HQIM implementation are conveyed to all school staff that are aligned to the district’s vision
- **All teachers receive HQIM professional development** and understand the HQIM system
- All staff are organized and prepared for implementation
- Teachers receive **adequate supports** such as instructional coaches, opportunities for collaboration and planning, modeling instruction using HQIM, and walkthroughs with feedback
- Operationalization of HQIM is observed in each classroom
- A continued process of improvement is in place to increase fidelity of implementation

With such an [essential role](#), principals need to establish a [supportive school environment](#) as teachers implement HQIM. It is critical that principals clearly define and communicate expectations of effective implementation as well as listen to teachers indicate their support needs.

Principals also have a major role in overseeing and encouraging data collection about the impact of HQIM materials on student learning. Observing a demonstrated increase in student learning creates buy-in. Without such follow-through by building leaders, use of materials can drop off over time despite implementation efforts. Collectively, the ongoing and coordinated efforts of the principal, instructional coach, and teacher leaders are key to appropriate HQIM classroom use with [instructional coherence](#) throughout the school.

### Resources for classroom observation

- [Guide and checklists for a school leader’s walkthrough during literacy instruction in grades 4–12 \(ed.gov\)](#)
- [School Leader’s Literacy Walkthrough \(ed.gov\)](#)
- [LIFT—Instructional—Practice—Guide—K—5—Literacy.pdf \(lifteducationtn.com\)](#)



“Oftentimes it’s assumed that high-quality materials equals high-quality instruction, but this isn’t true without ongoing professional learning.”

A teacher

### VIDEO

Listen to Marissa Payzant from the Nebraska Department of Education describe how a state education agency can support local implementation of HQIM in an environment of strong local control.

### VIDEO

Listen to Brent Conway discuss common challenges to fully implementing new curricular materials and ways to overcome them. In this video, he emphasizes taking into account how HQIM implementation interacts with existing systems (e.g., assessment, teacher evaluation, and scheduling).

### VIDEO

Listen to Vanessa Hilton, Chief Academic Officer, Pr. Vanessa Schools in Florida, advise that laying the groundwork for effective implementation of HQIM requires a balance of different types of professional learning:

- Grounding (or re-grounding) in learning standards
- Content of the curricular materials
- Compatible pedagogy and instructional practices

“Improving equitable education for all is a systems issue.”

Brent Conway