LEARNING EQUITY & ACADEMIC RECOVERY

THE NEW JERSEY LITERACY FRAMEWORK

A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials

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Acknowledgement

The Department extends deep gratitude to Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Legislature, particularly Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz, for their unwavering commitment to bolstering literacy education for New Jersey students. Their dedication to improving educational outcomes for all New Jersey students has made this guidance document possible.

This guidance is also deeply informed by the [recommendation report of the Working Group on Student Literacy](#), established pursuant to P.L.2024, c.52. The Department expresses appreciation to the Working Group and all who contributed to its research for their invaluable support.

Introduction and Purpose

In August 2024, Governor Phil Murphy signed [P.L. 2024, c.52](#) into law, reinforcing the State's commitment to improving literacy outcomes for students. This legislation builds on recent revisions to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS), [dyslexia](#) legislation, and the [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS)](#), initiating a broader effort to refine instructional literacy practices based on robust research in reading and learning.

As required by that law, this document provides guidance on identifying, selecting, and adopting high-quality instruction materials (HQIM) to support literacy instruction. This document is part two of the New Jersey Literacy Framework. The previous release of part one, *The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners* — available on the [Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](#) website—is meant to work in tandem with the *New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials* to provide districts with more detailed support.

[High-quality instructional materials](#) are the foundation of curriculum, which is a district-provided instructional plan outlining the knowledge, skills, and competencies students are expected to master, aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). As required by N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.4, curriculum must include pacing guides, assessments, interdisciplinary connections, and diverse instructional materials to support learners at all levels. HQIM serve as a critical tool for teachers to implement the curriculum. HQIM include specific learning goals and lessons aligned to content standards, research-based teaching strategies, teacher support materials, and embedded formative assessments to effectively help teachers implement instructional units and courses that are integrated, coherent, and sequenced. While districts in New Jersey write their own locally developed curriculum and choose their instructional materials to support this curriculum, school districts are advised to choose HQIM that align with curricular needs.

High Quality Instructional Materials

Overview

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are resources for teaching and learning that are aligned to standards, evidence-based, and designed to support both teachers and students, ultimately promoting effective and equitable instruction. These materials are intentionally designed to align with clearly defined learning goals and content standards, ensuring [consistency](#) and coherence across grade levels. HQIM promote culturally relevant, bias-free learning and include scaffolds to meet the needs of a full range of students, such as [multilingual learners](#), gifted learners, and those with learning differences. While curriculum serves as the foundation for districts' local instructional vision, the adoption of HQIM ensures [alignment](#) with the NJSLS.

HQIM are essential to delivering effective literacy instruction within the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER). When used in a structured and sequenced framework, HQIM provide research-based instruction that builds the foundational skills students need for long-term reading success. Clear guidelines for using HQIM in tier 1 instruction help ensure that all students have access to grade-level, standards-aligned content. As part of the *[Data-Informed Instruction Cycle](#)* (Figure 1), these materials offer embedded tools to assess student progress, enabling educators to make informed, responsive decisions about instruction. Ongoing analysis of universal screening data further supports adjustments to tier 1 implementation, helping ensure instruction remains rigorous and aligned to student needs over time.

Figure 1: Data-Informed Instruction
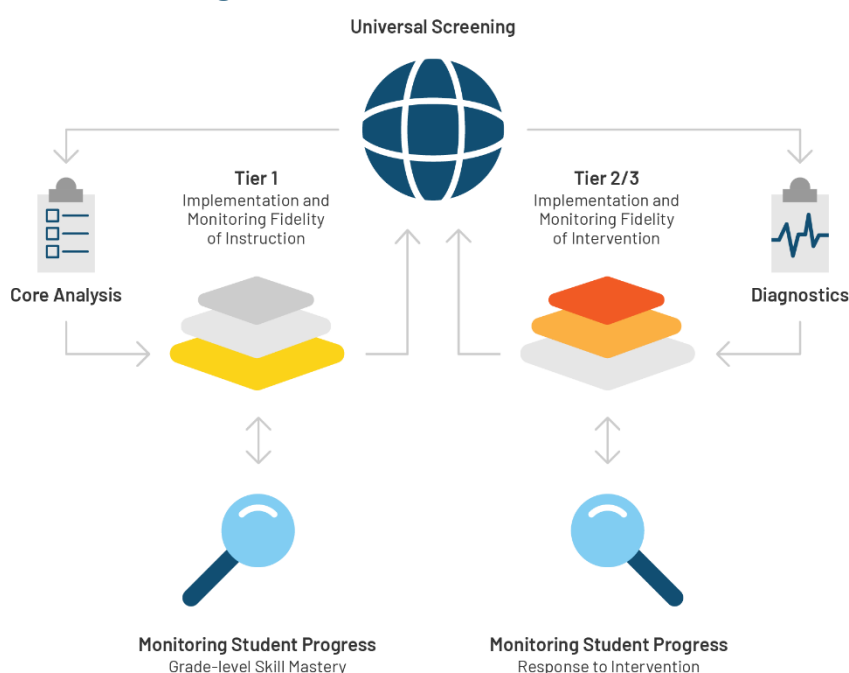
[Text Version: Data-Informed Instruction](#)

While the NJSLS define the knowledge and skills students must acquire at each grade level, educators determine how students engage with and master these standards through the effective development of curriculum guidelines that integrate HQIM. The quality of instruction is further enhanced when teachers implement these materials with integrity, creating rich and meaningful learning experiences.

The appendices included in this document provide tools designed to support the effective implementation of HQIM. These resources are as follows:

- [Appendix A: HQIM Rubric](#)
- [Appendix B: HQIM Implementation Checklist](#)
- [Appendix C.1: HQIM Family Two-Pager](#)
- [Appendix C.2: HQIM Educator Two-Pager](#)

Appendices A and B are intended to support implementing the guidance presented in this document and may be helpful to reference throughout the planning and implementation process. Appendices C.1 and C.2 offer communication tools tailored for specific stakeholder groups to support clear and consistent messaging.

Why It Matters

A well-structured, cohesive English language arts (ELA) curriculum that incorporates HQIM is more effective than a disconnected approach, as it ensures that all instructional and intervention components work together to support student learning (Liben & Paige, 2017; Graham et al., 2016). School districts that have transitioned to HQIM have seen improvements in students' reading of 10–19 percentile points (Borman, Dowling, & Schneck, 2008; Smith et al., 1993). In contrast, using non-HQIM can lead to inconsistency across classrooms, compromising student learning. When instructional materials vary widely in quality and rigor, students may experience gaps in content and uneven skill development, reducing the potential for equitable academic growth.

Data-driven early reading intervention is complex and requires expertise in using research-based instructional methods, yet many school personnel have not received professional training in these areas. Research shows that the quality of instructional materials has a substantial impact on student learning, with outcomes comparable to those associated with teacher effectiveness (Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012; Whitehurst, 2009; Boser, Chingos, & Straus, 2015). HQIM promote consistency across classrooms, ensuring that all students have access to the same rigorous learning experiences. These materials provide a cumulative scope and sequence of skills, consistent instructional plans and routines, and formative assessments. Well-designed texts and tasks also enhance students' critical thinking and comprehension skills by offering structured, standards-aligned instruction that systematically builds content knowledge and deepens understanding.

In addition to improving student outcomes through enhanced instructional consistency, HQIM give teachers more time for intentional planning to effectively address the diverse needs of their students. Teachers typically spend 7–12 hours per week sourcing or developing their own materials, which limits time for thoughtful lesson planning and increases the likelihood of using resources that are not research-based (Goldberg, 2016). Providing teachers with high-quality, research-based, standards-aligned resources within a NJTSS-ER framework allows them to spend less time finding and creating curricular materials and more time focusing on effective instruction and data analysis. This ensures that all students receive equitable access to rigorous, research-based learning opportunities not only through tier 1 core instruction but also through consistent, targeted support in tier 2 and tier 3 interventions. Operationalizing the processes and practices for effective research-based tier 1 instruction is critical for implementing HQIM that meet the needs of students and reduces the need for intensive intervention.

What Students Need

Students need direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in foundational skills at all grade levels, with a curriculum that is sequential and aligned to the NJSLS (Petscher et al., 2020; Seidenberg & Borkenhagen, 2020; Solari et al., 2022). HQIM, aligned with the priority skills measured through universal screening, ensure that teachers have the tools and resources needed to provide targeted, coherent support to meet the needs of all students (Burns et al., 2016; Clemens et al., 2018; Petscher et al., 2019). HQIM accelerate students' access to effective literacy instruction and assignments, setting a high bar for student experiences (Boser et al., 2015; LaVenia et al., 2023; Opfer et al., 2020).

To be considered high-quality, ELA instructional materials must include evidence-based instructional practices and address all essential components of reading instruction:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

    (Castles et al., 2018; Petscher et al., 2020; Seidenberg, 2017)

Furthermore, HQIM should reflect students' lived experiences, connect to their diverse backgrounds, and build essential background knowledge (Hammond, 2015; Muhammad, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017).

HQIM integrate evidence-based practices for both [word recognition](#) and [language comprehension](#) skill development as described in [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#) (2001). It incorporates best practices in word recognition skills instruction including explicit, systematic teaching in phonemic awareness, phonics, [decoding](#), and encoding, along with connected text reading to develop students' reading fluency–the accuracy and automaticity needed to support reading comprehension. HQIM also incorporate strategies for language comprehension to support students' [oral language](#) and vocabulary acquisition, offering differentiation and scaffolds for diverse learners (Neuman et al., 2018; Snell et al., 2015; Wright & Cervetti, 2017).

Language comprehension instruction should involve listening activities such as read-alouds from [complex texts,](#) explicit teaching of sentence structures and academic vocabulary, and robust conversations that develop students' academic language (The Reading League, 2021). As students strengthen their decoding and word analysis skills, instruction shifts to student-read grade-level texts, marking the transition from listening comprehension to independent reading comprehension. In addition, HQIM should include research-based writing instruction that is integrated, explicit, and purposefully connects reading and writing (Andrews et al., 2006; Duke et al., 2011; Graham et al., 2012). It should encourage students to write about what they read and read about what they write, reinforcing comprehension and application of textual content (Graham & Perin, 2007). By embedding these research-based strategies, HQIM provide students with the comprehensive literacy support needed for overall academic success.

Additionally [culturally responsive](#) instructional materials can enhance student engagement and success, while the absence of such representation can perpetuate inequities (Gay, 2002).

HQIM share key elements that make them effective. HQIM:

- Align with academic standards,

- Reflect students' lived experiences,

- Connect to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and

- Build essential academic knowledge utilizing research-based practices.

HQIM, paired with local instructional guidelines, should provide recommendations for scaffolds, accommodations, and assistive technologies to support a full continuum of learners. Scaffolding techniques help students engage with and master complex content, while accommodations remove unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities or language differences.

What Educators Need

To maximize the impact of HQIM on students' literacy outcomes, professional development for educators–including administrators, coaches, teachers, and related service providers–should focus on deepening an understanding of [evidence-based literacy practices](#) and the research behind how students learn to read. This professional development is best paired with aligned HQIM that translate research into classroom practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2016; Kraft et al., 2018). While educators will need training on how to access and navigate their curricular materials (which is typically the extent of curriculum training), additional professional development should go beyond "one-and-done" approaches. It should be ongoing and include quality professional learning opportunities to support sustained improvements over time (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2018).

Criteria for Selecting High-Quality Instructional Materials

It is important to select HQIM that address students' learning needs and align to the scientific research on literacy and learning. To ensure that all students in New Jersey have access to HQIM, a two-part rubric has been developed that establishes criteria for evaluating instructional materials that support tier 1 core instruction. A full-[fidelity](#) approach to choosing and implementing HQIM requires a sequential process:

1. All instructional materials are first evaluated using Criterion 1.
2. Only materials that meet expectations for Criterion 1 should move forward to be evaluated using Criterion 2.

Criterion 1 establishes the degree to which instruction meets the majority of students' needs and whether instructional materials align with [research-based literacy practices](#). In this step, school districts should utilize external reviews[1] to evaluate materials through the use of evidence-based instructional practices and essential components of reading instruction. Criterion 2 focuses on whether the materials are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of diverse learners and the local context.

District leadership teams are advised to identify educators who can serve as content expert reviewers to evaluate current and prospective instructional materials using this rubric to determine their overall quality. Content experts have expertise in effective literacy instruction and intervention practices. For more about building a leadership team, see *The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners*.

The two-part rubric can be found in [Appendix A](#).

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[1] External material reviews such as EdReports and The Reading League can be helpful tools for this process. Districts should evaluate which tool will work best for their needs.

Criterion 1 — Assess Whether Students' Needs are Met and Analyze Evidence of HQIM's Alignment to Research-Based Practices

It is important to establish the degree to which instruction meets the majority of students' needs and whether instructional materials align to research-based practices. As outlined in *The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners* , universal screening of all students analyzed at the classroom, grade, school, and district levels is crucial for determining the extent to which core instruction is meeting students' needs in key areas (e.g., skill development pertaining to phonological awareness, phonics/decoding, and language comprehension). Screening data, alongside systematic reviews of instructional materials and practices, are used to help determine the instructional changes and/or teacher training needed to meet students' needs. In some cases, existing core instruction may not be aligned with research-based practices in all skill areas. In other cases, core instruction may be aligned with research-based practices but not implemented consistently with fidelity. Analyses of screening data, alongside systematic reviews of instructional materials and practices, can be useful for helping to determine which action steps are needed to improve instruction.

External material reviews are available for many K–12 instructional resources. The reviews should consist of criteria that align closely to the expectations outlined in the NJSLS and encompass essential literacy practices in both foundational word recognition skills and language comprehension, focusing on knowledge-building, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Instructional materials that receive positive external reviews and align with New Jersey's standards should still be assessed against districts' specific needs and context ensuring that HQIM effectively serve all learners.

Instructional materials which have not been reviewed by external organizations may or may not meet the standards for HQIM. For materials which have not been reviewed, a rigorous and systematic review of their alignment to research-based practices is needed. This requires extensive analyses of guidance manuals, student materials, and program-embedded assessments to confirm that these critical literacy practices are present and that ineffective approaches have been avoided. Districts can consider using the [NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool](#) for an in-depth review.

Beyond the Ratings

When reviewing the quality instructional materials, districts must prioritize core literacy practices aligned with the latest research on effective literacy instruction. To ensure strong alignment and comprehensive support for teachers, districts should consider published curricular materials developed by researchers and practitioner experts. Research indicates that teacher-created or in-house resources are less likely to be standards-aligned and may lack the consistency and coherence necessary for effective instructional planning across grade-levels and classrooms (Polikoff & Dean, 2019).

Districts are advised to look beyond overall ratings on external reviews to assess whether the instructional materials support evidence-based instructional practices in all components of literacy instruction and avoid approaches that research has shown to be ineffective.

Explicit, Systematic Phonics Instruction and Decodable Texts

Strong instruction in foundational word recognition skills follows a [structured literacy](#) approach to phonemic awareness, decoding, and word reading fluency. This requires the inclusion of explicit, systematic phonics instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Materials must provide a cumulative scope and sequence for skill introduction and structured lesson plans. With ample opportunities for students to read decodable texts while reinforcing phonics and spelling patterns previously taught, educators do not need to rely on leveled readers that may not fully support this important decoding skill development.

Knowledge-Building and Comprehension Strategies

Research indicates that knowledge is a critical driver of reading comprehension, so materials should integrate science, social studies, and other content-rich topics to support deep learning in a variety of increasingly complex texts (Cervetti, Barber, Dorph, Pearson, & Goldschmidt, 2012). Materials should be designed to systematically build students' background knowledge, academic vocabulary, and exposure to complex [language structures](#) through rich, connected texts.

Misguided Practices

While it is important to ensure instructional materials include evidence-based effective instructional strategies to teach reading, it is equally as important to make sure ineffective approaches are not included.

Effective materials exclude practices such as [three-cueing,](#) leveled-reading approaches for skill development, and other strategies that are not supported by research. Districts are advised to carefully examine whether materials are fully aligned with a structured literacy approach for all aspects of literacy instruction. Materials must include instructional routines that foster a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., *I do, we do, you do*) and do not include mixed-method approaches that can lead to confusion.

"Basal Bloat"

Many traditional comprehensive reading (i.e. basal) programs include an overabundance of supplemental materials, which can overwhelm educators and distract from the core instructional focus. While these programs may technically align with standards, their lack of coherence and overabundance of resources make effective literacy instruction difficult to implement. It is recommended for districts to prioritize materials that emphasize coherent, high-impact resources rather than an overwhelming volume of disconnected components.

Close examination of external material reports, independent research reviews, and publisher-provided materials will provide valuable information on the inclusion of key literacy practices and the omission of ineffective approaches.

Criterion 2 — Consider Suitability for Diverse Learners, Accessibility, and Local Context

Once instructional materials meet the first criterion, a specific lens should be applied to assess their suitability for diverse learners, inclusivity, and local context. Adapted from the NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool, this criterion ensures that the selected materials are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to a wide range of learning needs. It also highlights the importance of culturally and linguistically affirming content. Instructional materials should be evaluated to ensure they:

- Provide the necessary support and scaffolding for students with disabilities or learning differences to access and master grade-level content,

- Emphasize bilingual literacy and language acquisition, aligned with the World-Class Instructional Design Assessment English Language Development (WIDA ELD) standards for multilingual learners (MLs), and

- Appropriately challenge gifted and talented learners.

Finally, it requires consideration of local contextual factors, such as instructional time, professional learning, and technology compatibility, to support effective implementation of the HQIM as it was intended to be delivered.

Establishing HQIM to Support Implementation of Effective Tier 1 Instruction

Implementing effective tier 1 instruction, much like the systematic and strategic effort required for universal screening, is not a one-time event but a continuous, coordinated process involving selecting instructional material, establishing consistent and coherent practices, and developing instructional guidelines. District leadership teams engage in a multi-year, collaborative effort aimed at aligning instructional practices to a shared, clear vision. This vision, supported by evidence-based criteria, fosters instructional coherence across classrooms, grade levels, and schools, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes.

Successful implementation of instructional materials unfolds in phases, each with distinct goals, activities, and supports. These phases guide schools in selecting HQIM, refining instructional practices, and continuously analyzing data to assess the impact of instructional adjustments on tier 1 instruction. According to [Columbia Law School's Center for Public Research and Leadership Curriculum Implementation Change Framework](#), successful curriculum implementation is driven by three key principles:

1. It is accomplished by individuals but requires a team effort.

2. It is a process, not a one-time event, involving continual growth and learning.

3. It is deeply personal because it involves teachers' own practice and beliefs about curriculum, often challenging their assumptions, and requires time, as it influences their feelings about the curriculum, how they use it, and the quality of that use.

   (Center for Public Research and Leadership, 2021)

There are key phases of this process that can support districts in establishing HQIM as a central component of their tier 1 instruction: *Strategic Leadership & Readiness*, *Informed Selection & Implementation,* and *Continuous Improvement & Sustainability*. [Appendix B](#) provides a simplified checklist to assist with implementation.

Phase 1: Strategic Leadership and Readiness

The first phase in implementing effective, evidence-based tier 1 instruction requires districts to set up structures for strategic leadership and readiness by building knowledge and assessing readiness. This entails team-based leadership and ongoing involvement from multiple educational stakeholders. Such a collaborative effort is essential for selecting, utilizing, and monitoring the effectiveness of instructional materials.

It is important to include leadership team members with distinct but complementary roles and responsibilities. The team should have the authority to make decisions and possess the resources and expertise necessary to support data-informed decision-making pertaining to HQIM and tier 1 instruction. *The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners* offers additional guidance on building an effective leadership team. This team should include district and school administrators, general education, special education, and bilingual/ESL staff, as well as instructional coaches. Input from community representatives, including caregivers and students, should also be sought to ensure a well-rounded perspective on the selection use of HQIM.

Working collaboratively, the leadership team can establish a clear vision for tier 1 instruction that is grounded in research-based practices and that meets the diverse learning needs of students. This will require a thorough review of the district's universal screening data to understand the extent to which the current tier 1 core instruction is meeting the needs of all students. The goal of core instruction is to enable the majority of students to attain skill proficiency, reducing the number of students requiring intervention supports. Through deeper analysis of the current instructional vision and materials, the leadership team can determine whether new HQIM are needed or if further training is required to support the effective use of existing, research-aligned HQIM. This ensures coherent and equitable implementation across classrooms. For an additional in-depth analysis, districts can also utilize the NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool, this is especially useful when evaluating materials currently in use.

Phase 2: Informed Selection & Implementation

After evaluating the extent to which changes to core instruction are needed, the leadership team can make informed decisions about adjusting HQIM and/or providing targeted training. These adjustments are critical to ensure equitable access to high-quality instruction and consistency across classrooms.

Selecting HQIM

During this data-based analysis, if it is determined that new instructional materials are needed, the team may establish a process for engaging multiple vendors to gain insights into the features, implementation support, and adaptability of different products aligned with this guidance for HQIM. Analysis of prospective tier 1 instructional materials involves the use of external reviews and considerations articulated in the section above, titled *Criteria for Selecting High-Quality Instructional Materials*. The two-part rubric found in Appendix A is designed to assist in the analysis of instructional materials to determine if they meet criteria for HQIM.

To ensure that material selection reflects the district's specific context, the team may pilot promising HQIM with a subset of schools or classrooms. This piloting process allows educators to assess how well the materials align with local needs, fit into existing instructional practices, and support diverse learners. It also offers an opportunity to gather authentic feedback from teachers and students on usability, effectiveness, and feasibility. A clear pilot evaluation plan—aligned with the district's instructional vision—is essential. Data from these pilots, including qualitative insights and student performance outcomes, informs the team's final decision-making process. By investing in this exploratory work, including piloting materials, the district not only ensures strengthens leadership's understanding of HQIM but also builds the collective readiness and commitment necessary for successful material adoption and long-term instructional improvement including specific professional learning needs (Ward et al., 2023).

Implementing HQIM

Once HQIM have been evaluated and selected, robust [curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL)](#) is essential to support their effective implementation. This includes developing a schedule for ongoing training and coaching that supports all educators engaging with tier 1 instructional materials. CBPL should go beyond simply learning to navigate the HQIM; it should strengthen tier 1 instruction and foster data-based decision-making systemwide.

To be effective, this professional learning must be embedded in classroom practice and sustained over time. Structures such as collaborative planning time (CPT) or professional learning communities (PLCs) allow teachers to internalize units and lessons, analyze student work, and improve instruction through continuous cycles of coaching, feedback, and reflection.

Leaders are key to creating the conditions for CBPL to thrive. This involves protecting time for planning and learning, aligning curriculum and professional development with instructional goals, and investing in strong materials and instructional leadership (Short & Hirsh, 2020). A clear and consistent vision, modeled by school and district leaders, helps ensure coherence and signals long-term commitment. Change management is also critical. Implementing HQIM often requires shifts in instructional practice, which can feel daunting. Leaders should anticipate challenges, communicate the purpose behind the changes, and celebrate progress along the way. Highlighting early adopters as champions of the work can build trust and momentum across the system.

Decisions about scaling implementation should be guided by data and context. Schools may be at different levels of readiness, and factors such as teacher capacity, leadership support, and the effectiveness of professional learning systems should inform expansion plans. A thoughtful, responsive approach helps ensure the successful and lasting integration of HQIM into everyday instruction (Short & Hirsh, 2020)

Operationalizing HQIM

To promote consistency in instruction delivery, the use of HQIM is operationalized by developing grade-level guidelines that articulate expected materials and assessments, practices, and pacing requirements. These guidelines, for both whole group and small group settings, provide clear and specific expectations on HQIM implementation, leading to consistent classroom delivery. Watch this brief video, created in partnership by Rutgers University and the NJDOE through the NJTSS-ER project, titled [NJTSS-ER Mapping Tier 1 Instructional Guidelines video](#) to learn more.

Once tier 1 instructional guidelines have been developed, it is important to monitor the fidelity of implementation. Fidelity refers to the degree to which the instructional processes and procedures outlined in the instructional guidelines are consistently followed and applied without significant modifications or deviations. Fidelity does not mean rigidly following scripted instructions—effective instruction will always require teachers to make informed decisions based on the needs of their students. This includes ensuring that HQIM are delivered as intended. Walkthrough observations, teacher reflections, student task/work analysis may also be analyzed. These data points help determine where additional support is needed, allowing the implementation team to refine professional learning and adjust instructional strategies. Establishing structured feedback loops between teachers, school leaders, and district staff is essential, providing a space for educators to share challenges, celebrate successes, and receive targeted support.

Phase 3: Continuous Improvement & Sustainability

Data collection and analysis to monitor student outcomes and implementation progress are needed for districts to make informed decisions. It is essential to analyze student performance at the district, school, and classroom levels. This analysis helps determine instructional effectiveness and identifies specific needs, which may include adjusting pacing, modifying delivery methods, providing supplemental resources, or addressing professional learning requirements.

As new staff join or the district expands implementation of the HQIM to additional grade levels or schools, teams should revisit earlier phases of the process to reinforce and strengthen their processes and practices around HQIM selection. This adaptive approach acknowledges that curriculum implementation is a change process—one that evolves over time and requires ongoing investment. By continuously monitoring and refining processes and practices related to their HQIM, districts can build educator capacity to promote students' skill development and equitable access to resources. Ultimately, this ongoing commitment to the implementation of HQIM strengthens instructional quality, promotes equity, and drives meaningful, long-term improvements in student outcomes (Ward et al., 2023).

To ensure that processes and practices are responsive to both student and educator needs, regular implementation meetings, leadership check-ins, and teacher feedback sessions are essential. These continuous feedback loops foster a collaborative environment where teachers feel heard and supported, strengthening commitment to the change process and making it more sustainable and effective over time. As implementation gains momentum, success is measured not only through student outcomes but also through instructional integrity and teacher confidence. This phase is not just about introducing new HQIM; it is about building a culture of continuous learning and improvement, ensuring that the tier 1 instructional shifts become deeply embedded in practice and lead to lasting student success. Ongoing feedback and adaptation are key to preventing regression and maintaining instructional integrity (Kloos et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2023).

For a detailed Implementation Checklist, please see Appendix B. In addition, free resources and online training focused on selecting, implementing, and operationalizing HQIM within the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) are available via the NJTSS-ER website.

Considerations for HQIM for Intervention

Intervention materials must be research- and evidence-based, aligning closely with tier 1 core instruction to ensure consistency and coherence, driving meaningful student growth (TNTP, 2024). Whether instruction happens in the classroom or through targeted support, the same research-based principles for effective early literacy apply across all tiers.

Key principles for intensifying instruction should be present in every tier (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Malone, 2017), as outlined in *The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners*. This approach emphasizes targeted, data-driven planning that aligns with standards and meets individual student needs, as supported by the NJTSS-ER framework.

To learn more, watch this brief video, created through a partnership between Rutgers University and the NJDOE to build capacity for NJTSS-ER, titled Elements of Effective Intervention.

As students begin receiving interventions, the process should remain flexible and responsive. Ongoing progress monitoring helps determine whether students are making progress and whether instructional strategies or materials need to be adjusted. This continuous, data-informed cycle helps educators provide the right support at the right time.

Districts can choose the intervention approach that best fits their needs. Some may use standardized programs with structured protocols, while others may opt for individualized interventions tailored to specific student needs. This flexibility allows schools to effectively support diverse learners while considering local capacity and resources.

The goal of any intervention is to help students build the skills they need to succeed. This includes teaching strategies they can apply in different situations and giving corrective feedback when needed. By using data to continually improve instruction, schools can ensure that interventions are effective, equitable, and aligned across all tiers. This approach promotes consistency, reduces ineffective practices, and ensures every student gets the support they need to thrive.

The NJDOE will continue to update its Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery website with vetted materials and resources.

Communicating with Families

Effective communication with families is essential for building accountability and fostering public trust. To achieve this, curriculum transparency plays a critical role. School districts are encouraged to share their instructional materials through various methods, such as posting on their website, presenting during back-to-school nights, and including in school-home communications. By providing clear and easily accessible details about the use of HQIM, districts will empower families to be partners. Many HQIM provide templates of family letters and materials that can be utilized or adapted to fit with the district's instructional vision.

Conclusion

HQIM are foundational to delivering equitable, evidence-based literacy instruction that meets the diverse needs of New Jersey's students. Through strategic leadership, thoughtful selection processes, and ongoing professional learning, districts can ensure that all students have access to rigorous, inclusive, and coherent instruction. By embedding HQIM within a tiered system of supports and continuously refining practices based on data, New Jersey schools can build instructional systems that foster lifelong reading success. While this guidance centers on literacy, it's helpful to remember that the research supporting HQIM extends across all content areas.

Glossary

Alignment

In the context of intensifying intervention, how well the instruction/intervention:

    a. Targets the student's specific skill needs

    b. Avoids focusing on skills the student has already mastered

    c. Emphasizes relevant grade-level standards

(Fuchs, Fuchs, & Malone, 2017)

Background Knowledge

The prior knowledge, including facts, concepts, beliefs, and experiences, that helps readers make inferences and connect new information with what they already know

Basal Bloat

The excessive inclusion of supplemental and ancillary materials in traditional comprehensive reading (i.e. basal) programs, which can overwhelm teachers, distract from core instruction, and make effective implementation difficult.

Coherence

A unified instructional approach where curriculum, interventions, and assessments align. Students engage with consistent materials, leaders keep teachers focused, and caregivers understand student progress and support learning (TNTP, 2024).

Complex Text

A text with characteristics that increase the level of difficulty in reading and comprehending it. Text complexity is determined by quantitative measures (such as word length, sentence structure, and cohesion), qualitative measures (including depth of meaning, text organization, and language clarity), and reader and task considerations (such as the reader's background knowledge, motivation, and purpose for reading).

Consistency

Schools ensure steady, high-quality instruction through shared curriculum, structured teacher collaboration, and reinforced instructional practices. All students engage in grade-level work with support, and educators continuously improve through teamwork and clear leadership (TNTP, 2024).

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Practices that create a supportive, inviting environment where students, particularly those who have been marginalized, feel a sense of belonging.

Curriculum-Based Professional Learning (CBPL)

Ongoing, job-embedded approach to teacher development that centers on high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials. Unlike traditional one-time workshops, CBPL engages teachers in active, inquiry-based learning experiences that mirror what they are expected to implement with students. It is designed to deepen teachers' content knowledge, refine instructional practices, and shift beliefs about student learning through collaborative study, lesson rehearsal, coaching, and reflection (Short & Hirsh, 2020).

Decoding

A process of using phoneme-grapheme correspondences to sound out words or nonsense words.

Dyslexia

A specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3).

Evidence-Based Literacy Practices

Instructional methods and strategies for teaching reading and writing that are supported by rigorous research and data, demonstrating their efficacy and/or effectiveness under controlled conditions in well-conducted studies.

Explicit Instruction

A direct approach to instruction that not only includes clear teacher-led explanations and demonstrations but also emphasizes active student engagement, practice, and immediate corrective feedback. It's designed to make the learning process transparent, often incorporating an "I do, we do, you do" gradual release of responsibility model. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommended explicit, systematic instruction for teaching reading.

Fidelity

The degree to which a program, intervention, or strategy is delivered as intended by its design. It ensures that the components and procedures outlined are consistently followed and applied correctly, without significant modifications or deviations.

Fluency

The ability to read a text with accuracy, speed, and expression, allowing readers to understand and make meaning of what they are reading. Key components include prosody, rate, accuracy, and automaticity.

High-Quality Instructional Materials

Instructional materials that include specific learning goals and lessons aligned to content standards, research-based teaching strategies, teacher support materials, and embedded formative assessments to effectively help teachers implement instructional units and courses that are integrated, coherent, and sequenced. Materials are culturally relevant, free from bias, and easy to use with support for diverse learners.

Implementation Stages

Implementation happens in four discernible stages:

- Exploration: In this stage, teams examine the strengths and needs of the people the program or practice is intended to serve. They also assess whether the new approach fits those needs and whether it is realistic to implement in their setting.

- Installation: This phase focuses on building the necessary foundation for implementation, including preparing staff and developing organizational systems to support the work.

- Initial Implementation: During this stage, staff begin using the new program or practice. Teams use data to monitor progress and make improvements along the way.

- Full Implementation: At this point, the program or practice is used effectively and consistently by staff, leading to measurable positive outcomes for the larger population.

Language Comprehension

The ability to interpret both literal and implied meanings from spoken language. It involves synthesizing and organizing information from various language systems to construct meaning.

Language Structure

The underlying rules and systems that govern how language is organized, both at the level of semantics (meaning-based relationships between words and phrases) and syntax (sentence structure, word order, and grammar–the relationships between different parts of speech).

Multilingual Learner

Students with a primary language other than English who are in the process of developing proficiency in English.

New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS)

New Jersey's framework of supports and interventions to improve student achievement, based on the core components of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and the three tier prevention logic of Response to Intervention.

Oral Language

A system of communication that utilizes spoken words to convey meaning. It encompasses both receptive (listening) and expressive (speaking) skills

Phonemic Awareness

The awareness of the individual speech sounds in spoken words and the ability to consciously manipulate those phonemes.

Phonics

A method of teaching reading and spelling that emphasizes the relationship between graphemes and their corresponding phonemes. It involves helping students understand how letters or combinations of letters represent the sounds in spoken words. Phonics instruction focuses on teaching students to decode (sound out) and encode (spell) words by recognizing these phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

Progress Monitoring

A systematic process of tracking student growth using multiple-form assessment tools, particularly for students receiving intervention who scored below screening benchmark expectations. These tools help measure students' response to intervention and inform instructional adjustments as needed.

Reading Comprehension

The ability to extract and construct literal and inferred meaning from written text.

Research-Based Literacy Practices

Instructional methods and strategies for teaching reading and writing that are grounded in the best available research, demonstrating their potential effectiveness in typical school environments when implemented with fidelity.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

A theoretical model that illustrates the complex process of skilled reading. It depicts how multiple interconnected skill strands of word recognition and language comprehension combine and strengthen over time to support fluent and effective comprehension of text.

Structured Literacy

An evidence-based approach to teaching reading and writing that integrates oral language, decoding, spelling, and comprehension through explicit, systematic, and diagnostic instruction in foundational and advanced language skills.

Systematic Instruction

A structured approach to teaching that follows a carefully organized sequence, ensuring content is delivered in a logical, step-by-step manner. It emphasizes clear progression from simple concepts to more complex concepts, with deliberate planning and consistency in teaching methods. This approach often includes ongoing assessment to monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed. The National Reading Panel (2000) recommended systematic, explicit instruction for teaching reading.

Three-Cueing System

A literacy instruction approach that encourages students to use three types of cues to identify and read words: meaning, structure, and visual cues.

Tier 1

Research-based core instruction including both whole-group lessons and differentiated small-group supports aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, using grade-level materials provided to all students in general education, bilingual, and ESL classrooms, regardless of performance level. As the primary prevention for reading and writing difficulties, it maximizes learning through direct modeling and support, and access to grade-level texts and tasks.

Tier 2

Targeted intervention providing additional evidence-based support beyond Tier 1 for students performing below benchmark expectations on universal screening. Recommended for small groups of 3 to 5 students, intervention occurs 3 to 5 days per week and is provided by interventionists, reading specialists, or classroom teachers. Instruction focuses on skill development and increases in intensity, frequency, and duration based on ongoing progress monitoring. Diagnostic assessments help determine intervention foci, with adjustments made based on individual student data.

Tier 3

Intensive intervention providing evidence-based support beyond Tier 2 for students performing significantly below benchmark expectations on universal screening or for whom Tier 2 interventions are insufficient. Recommended for small groups of 2 to 3 students or individual students, these interventions occur more frequently and are provided by interventionists, reading specialists, or classroom teachers. Instruction focuses on skill development and increases in intensity, frequency, and duration based on ongoing progress monitoring. Diagnostic assessments help determine intervention foci, with adjustments made based on individual student data.

Universal Screening

An assessment process conducted to gather information about a student's overall academic skills and to identify or predict the risk of difficulties in priority skill areas. This process helps inform core instruction and determine if further diagnostic assessment is necessary to guide targeted intervention.

Vocabulary

The knowledge of word meanings that impacts readers ability to comprehend language, including breadth (number of words known), depth (understanding of words in context), and precision (accurate use of words).

Word Recognition

The ability to recognize printed words accurately and quickly, allowing efficient access to stored word meanings without conscious effort.

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Appendices

> **Note**: In this PDF, Appendices A through C.2 are provided as samples. For the working, editable documents, download the HQIM Appendices Word document from the [Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](#) website.

Appendix A—HQIM Rubric

This rubric is designed to ensure that selected instructional materials are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLS-ELA) and reflect evidence-based instructional practices that support the diverse needs of all students. The rubric has been adapted from the NJTSS Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool.

The rubric must be used sequentially to evaluate one instructional program at a time.

- Begin with Criterion 1 to determine whether the materials meet the expectations for alignment to research-based literacy instruction.
- Only if materials meet the expectations in Criterion 1 should reviewers proceed to Criterion 2, which evaluates inclusivity, accessibility, and local relevance.

This process ensures that all materials considered for adoption are grounded in high-quality, research-based literacy practices before assessing their suitability for diverse learners and specific district needs.

As educators work to evaluate HQIM, read each element and determine the level at which the materials address the element at each grade level. Be sure to include any clarifying notes.

Scale:

- 3: Almost Always
- 2: Sometimes
- 1: Seldom
- 0: Not Evident

Criterion 1: Assess Whether Students' Needs are Met and Analyze Evidence of HQIM's Alignment to Research-Based Practices

Dimension 1: Assessment of Student Needs

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Universal screening data analyzed at classroom, grade, school, and district levels to determine to what degree instruction is meeting students' needs in key areas					

Dimension 2: External Materials Review

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Satisfies relevant criteria of district's selected external review					
2. When external review is unavailable, rigorous review has confirmed alignment to research-based practices in key areas (e.g., NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool)					
3. Emphasizes explicit, systematic phonics instruction and decodable texts					
4. Avoids practices unsupported by research					
5. Emphasizes knowledge building					
6. Avoids Basal Bloat					

7. Do the materials pass Criterion 1?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If materials pass, move to criterion 2.

Criterion 2: Consider Suitability for Diverse Learners, Accessibility, and Local Context

Note: Many of the considerations for diverse learners would benefit all learners.

Dimension 1: Considerations for Students with Disabilities or Learning Difficulties

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Includes explicit instructional routines and resources for differentiating/scaffolding reading instruction with emphasis on targeted, foundational word recognition and language comprehension skills for small-group and/or individualized support					
2. Includes resources for providing accommodations and modifications (e.g., manipulatives, graphic organizers, audiobooks for grade level texts)					
3. Provides ample opportunities for distributed skill practice and rereading texts (e.g., repeated practice, repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading)					

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
4. Provides decodable, controlled texts (including words with previously and recently taught sound-spelling patterns) of varied genres and topics for application of skills and extended repeated practice					
5. Includes assessments with explicit criteria to screen for potential reading problems and to monitor the progress of students who require small-group or individualized differentiated instruction					

6. Do the materials meet the needs of students with disabilities or learning difficulties?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence:

Note: Examples are provided for Spanish speakers; however, the elements can be applied to support students who speak a variety of home languages.

Dimension 2: Considerations for Multilingual Learners

Elements	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Includes texts of varied genres and topics for providing reading instruction in students' home language and in English including authentic texts in home language.					
2. Uses knowledge of phonemes in students' home language to support learning phonemes in English (e.g., discusses the features of sounds in English)					
3. Uses knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences in students' home language to support learning letters and letter-sound correspondences in English (e.g., analyzes *ñ* /ɲ/ as compared to *n* /n/, using target words from students' home language)					

Elements	K	1	2	3	Evidence
4. Extends opportunities to incorporate word meanings into phonics and decoding instruction, leveraging visual representations or cognates (words whose spellings and meanings are similar across languages) whenever possible (e.g., incorporating a picture for the word *boat*, comparing the words *banco* and *bank*)					
5. Provides opportunities to analyze the commonalities and differences between punctuation in students' home language and in English to support reading fluency (e.g., *¿Qué hora es?* in comparison to *What time is it?*)					
6. Provides ample opportunities to hear fluent and expressive reading in students' home language and in English (e.g., interactive read-alouds, modeled and shared reading, etc.)					
7. Provides ample opportunities to reread texts in students' home language and in English (e.g., repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading, reader's theater, etc.)					

Elements	K	1	2	3	Evidence
8. Uses vocabulary knowledge in students' home language to support vocabulary development in English, leveraging cognates (words whose spellings and meanings are similar across languages) to create metalinguistic awareness whenever possible (e.g., *teléfono* vs *telephone, ir* vs *go*)					
9. Provides opportunities to analyze the commonalities and differences between syntax in students' home language and in English to support comprehension (e.g., adjective location, conjugation, etc)					
10.Provides ample opportunities for using new vocabulary and language structures to make connections to concepts and students' own lived experiences orally and in writing					
11.Includes assessments with explicit criteria to monitor the progress of multilingual learners who require small-group or individualized differentiated instruction					

12. Do the materials meet the needs of multilingual learners?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence:

Dimension 3: Considerations for Gifted and Talented Learners

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Includes strategic instruction in analysis and interpretation of complex content and themes within appropriately advanced text					
2. Provides opportunities for flexible and collaborative shared reading/writing experiences with peers at a similar advanced level					
3. Includes above-grade-level, advanced texts of varied genres, topics, and characters for application of advanced skills					
4. Includes opportunities for inquiry and independent research, creative reading/writing tasks, and activities focused on more complex content and themes					

5. Do the materials meet the needs of gifted and talented learners?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence:

Dimension 4: Considerations for Inclusive Materials

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. Opportunities are provided for frequent student interaction with a variety of culturally and linguistically affirming connected texts					
2. A variety of culturally affirming, sufficiently complex, knowledge-building text sets are used to develop students' background knowledge in a variety of genres and content areas					
3. Text selections are diverse and culturally affirming, motivating, and of high-interest.					
4. Includes content-rich lessons that explicitly and purposefully build on or connect to students' cultural background knowledge to encourage deep processing and analytical thinking in students' home language and in English					

5. Do the materials meet the needs for inclusivity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence:

Dimension 5: Considerations for Local Context

Element	K	1	2	3	Evidence
1. The materials fit within the district's allotted instructional time without requiring significant modifications.					
2. The materials provide clear guidance and professional learning support that align with instructional needs, and the district's schedule allows for the suggested amount of professional learning.					
3. The materials are compatible with the district's technology resources, including devices, internet access, and learning platforms.					

4. Do the materials meet the needs of the local context?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Evidence:

Additional Considerations

No single set of instructional materials will meet all student needs. Educators should focus on how adaptable materials are, rather than relying solely on their current form. It's important to balance the need for specialized support with the goal of inclusive education. When possible, prioritize materials that serve multiple special populations at once.

Effective use of high-quality instructional materials also depends on curriculum-based professional learning. Educators need ongoing, embedded, and collaborative learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of the materials, instructional strategies, and ways to adapt them for diverse learners. Aligning professional learning with the curriculum ensures materials are used effectively to support all students.

Definitions

Explicit, Systematic Phonics Instruction and Decodable Texts

Strong foundational word recognition skills instruction follows a structured literacy approach to phonemic awareness, decoding, and word reading fluency. This requires the inclusion of explicit, systematic phonics instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Materials must provide a cumulative scope and sequence for skill introduction and structured lesson plans. With ample opportunities for students to read decodable texts while reinforcing phonics and spelling patterns previously taught, educators do not need to rely on leveled readers that may not fully support this important decoding skill development.

Knowledge-Building and Comprehension Strategies

Research indicates that knowledge is a critical driver of reading comprehension, so materials should integrate science, social studies, and other content-rich topics to support deep learning in a variety of increasingly complex texts (Cervetti, Barber, Dorph, Pearson, & Goldschmidt, 2012). Materials must be designed to systematically build students' background knowledge, academic vocabulary, and exposure to complex language structures through rich, connected texts.

Misguided Practices

Effective materials exclude practices such as three-cueing, leveled-reading approaches for skill development, and other strategies that are not supported by research. Districts are advised to carefully examine whether materials are fully aligned with a structured literacy approach for all aspects of literacy instruction. Materials must include instructional routines that foster a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., *I do, we do, you do*) and do not include mixed-method approaches that can lead to confusion.

Basal Bloat

Many traditional comprehensive reading (i.e. basal) programs contain excessive ancillary materials that can overwhelm educators and dilute instructional foci. While these programs may technically align with standards, their lack of coherence and overabundance of resources make effective literacy instruction difficult to implement. It is recommended for districts to prioritize materials that emphasize coherent, high-impact resources rather than an overwhelming volume of disconnected components.

Appendix B—HQIM Implementation Checklist

This HQIM Implementation Checklist is designed to guide district and school leaders through the three key phases of adopting and sustaining High-Quality Instructional Materials: Strategic Leadership & Readiness, Informed Selection & Launch, and Continuous Improvement & Sustainability. Grounded in evidence-based practices and aligned with the *New Jersey Literacy Framework* and *NJTSS-ER* , the checklist supports data-informed decision-making and instructional coherence. It serves as a practical tool to ensure that HQIM are implemented effectively, equitably, and with lasting impact on student outcomes.

Phase 1: Strategic Leadership & Readiness

☐ Establish a Leadership Team:

- Include district/school leaders, general/special education, bilingual/ESL staff, coaches, and community representatives.
- Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority.

☐ Assess District Readiness:

- Review universal screening data to determine effectiveness of current Tier 1 instruction.
- Use NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool for a deeper review of current practices and materials.

☐ Develop a Clear Instructional Vision:

- Align vision to research-based literacy practices and equity.
- Ensure the vision supports coherence across classrooms, grade levels, and schools.

☐ Build Knowledge on HQIM:

- Train leadership team on evidence-based criteria for HQIM ((i.e., all team members take the NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Online Learning Course).
- Engage stakeholders in understanding the value and purpose of HQIM.

Phase 2: Informed Selection & Implementation

☐ Determine Need for New HQIM:

- Use data analysis to decide if existing materials need to be supplemented or replaced.
- Identify whether additional professional learning is needed for current HQIM.

☐ Select HQIM:

- Engage vendors and analyze products using external reviews and the state-aligned rubric (Appendix A).
- Consider adaptability, support structures, and alignment with district context.

☐ Pilot Materials:

- Test selected HQIM in a subset of schools or classrooms.
- Collect teacher and student feedback, assess alignment with instructional needs.
- Use student outcome data to inform final selection.

☐ Plan Professional Learning:

- Develop training and coaching schedules for all instructional staff.
- Focus on HQIM navigation, instructional shifts, and data use.
- Embed learning in collaborative planning time (CPT) or PLCs.

☐ Operationalize HQIM:

- Create grade-level instructional guidelines (materials, assessments, pacing). See NJTSS-ER Mapping Tier 1 Instructional Guidelines.
- Define expectations for both whole and small group instruction.

☐ Support Early Implementation:

- Train key personnel in instructional materials and data tools.
- Use early adopters as champions to build buy-in and peer support.

☐ Monitor Fidelity:

- Conduct walkthroughs, teacher reflections, and student work reviews.
- Adjust support based on fidelity data and teacher feedback.

Phase 3: Continuous Improvement & Sustainability

☐ Analyze Student Outcomes:

- Analyze assessment data at district, school, and classroom levels.
- Identify areas needing instructional or pacing adjustments, supplemental resources, or additional PD.

☐ Maintain Feedback Loops:

- Hold regular implementation meetings and check-ins.
- Use teacher feedback to guide improvements and adjustments.

☐ Adapt and Expand Implementation:

- Revisit earlier phases when onboarding new staff or scaling HQIM to new schools/grades.
- Tailor expansion efforts based on school readiness and capacity.

☐ Build a Culture of Continuous Learning:

- Celebrate progress and maintain focus on instructional integrity.
- Ensure sustainable structures for collaboration and reflection.

☐ Ensure Sustainability:

- Align processes and practices with HQIM to promote equity and coherence.
- Embed HQIM into district systems for long-term impact and improvement.

Appendix C.1—HQIM Family 2-pager

Purpose

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to helping every child become a strong and confident reader and writer. In New Jersey, curriculum is defined as a district-provided instructional plan that outlines the knowledge, skills, and competencies students are expected to master, aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). School district curriculum includes pacing guides, assessments, interdisciplinary connections, and diverse resources to support learners at all levels (NJDOE, 2022). High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) serve as the foundation for the curriculum. This guide explains how schools choose High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) to support your child's literacy development. These materials are carefully selected to ensure all students receive the best possible instruction in reading and writing.

What Are High-Quality Instructional Materials?

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are reading and writing programs and tools that:

- Align with New Jersey's academic standards
- Leverage strong research
- Help all students—including multilingual learners and students with disabilities—access grade-level content
- Support both classroom instruction and small group learning

These materials provide teachers with clear lesson plans, engaging texts, and helpful assessments so they can focus more on teaching and less on creating materials from scratch.

Why It Matters

When schools use low-quality materials, students may experience confusion or gaps in learning. HQIM provide a consistent and strong foundation for learning, helping students:

- Build vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Practice phonics, decoding, fluency, and comprehension.
- Read and write about meaningful topics.
- Stay on track with their grade-level learning goals.
- Access rigorous and high-quality learning experiences, regardless of the classroom context.

Teachers also benefit from HQIM because they spend less time searching for materials and more time teaching and supporting your child.

What Families Should Know

The materials used in your child's classroom go through a careful selection process. School leaders and teachers:

- Review national evaluations to find programs that meet quality standards.
- Make sure materials meet the needs of all students in their community.
- Pilot programs before making a final choice.
- Provide professional learning for teachers to use the materials effectively.

What You Can Expect

If your child's school is using HQIM, you may notice:

- A consistent routine in reading and writing lessons
- Strong focus on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension
- Rich and diverse texts that reflect different cultures and perspectives
- Opportunities for your child to talk, read, and write about what they are learning

How Families Can Stay Involved

Your child's school may share more about the literacy materials through:

- Back-to-school nights
- School newsletters or websites
- Take-home letters and learning activities

Many HQIM also include family guides or tips for supporting learning at home.

If you want to learn more about how reading is taught or the materials being used, reach out to your child's teacher or principal. You can also find resources on the NJDOE's Learning Equity and Academic Recovery webpage and the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network START webpage to help support your child's literacy journey.

Together, we can ensure that every child in New Jersey has access to high-quality, equitable literacy instruction that supports lifelong learning and success.

Appendix C.2—HQIM Educator 2-pager

Purpose

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to improving literacy outcomes through the use of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). This guide helps educators understand what HQIM are, why they matter, and how they can support effective and equitable literacy instruction aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

What Are High-Quality Instructional Materials?

HQIM are standards-aligned, evidence-based instructional tools that support teachers in delivering coherent, rigorous, and inclusive literacy instruction. These materials provide structured guidance for instruction, support differentiation, and promote equity by ensuring every student has access to grade-level content.

Why HQIM Matter

Research shows that coherent, well-structured literacy programs enhance instructional quality and student achievement. HQIM free teachers from hunting for or creating materials, enabling more time for thoughtful lesson planning and better alignment with state standards and individual student needs. Consistent, research-based instruction through HQIM creates equal learning opportunities for students across classrooms and schools.

What HQIM Should Include

Effective HQIM for literacy include:

- Explicit, systematic phonics instruction and decodable texts
- Instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
- Integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks
- Culturally and linguistically inclusive content.
- Embedded formative assessments to guide instruction

Selecting HQIM

Districts should use evidence-based criteria to evaluate materials, such as external reviews, the NJDOE HQIM rubric, and local data (e.g., universal screening results). The two-part HQIM rubric developed by NJDOE assesses both research alignment and responsiveness to diverse learners.

Implementing HQIM in the Classroom

Effective HQIM implementation involves:

- Developing clear instructional guidelines and pacing expectations

- Providing ongoing, curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL)

- Facilitating teacher collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Collaborative Planning Time (CPT)

- Monitoring fidelity of use through observations and student work analysis

- Using data to adjust instruction and supports

HQIM and Tiered Instruction

HQIM are central to Tier 1 instruction. When used consistently and effectively, they can reduce the need for intervention by ensuring most students succeed in core instruction. Intervention materials should align closely with Tier 1 HQIM to maintain coherence across support levels.

Sustaining and Improving HQIM Use

Implementation is an ongoing process. Districts and schools should regularly review student data, gather teacher feedback, and revisit implementation strategies to ensure HQIM use remains effective, equitable, and aligned with student needs.

For additional guidance, training, and resources on HQIM implementation, visit the NJDOE's Learning Equity and Academic Recovery webpage (nj.gov/education/lear).

Appendix D—Text Version: Data-Informed Instruction

This diagram is a visual model of data-informed instruction within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

Universal Screening

At the center top is "Universal Screening" represented by a globe icon. Two pathways emerge from the screening process:

- Tier 1 instruction with fidelity monitoring (left side)
- Tier 2 and 3 Intervention with fidelity monitoring (right side)

Tier 1 Instruction with Fidelity Monitoring

The left side represents the implementation of Tier 1 Instruction with fidelity monitoring.

- **Core instruction**: signified by a yellow layered icon
- **Core analysis:** analysis process that monitors the quality of core instruction (signified by a clipboard)
- **Monitoring student progress in grade-level skill mastery:** signified by magnifying glass

Tier 2 and 3 Intervention with Fidelity Monitoring

The right side represents the implementation of Tier 2/3 Intervention with fidelity monitoring.

- **Targeted and intensive instruction:** signified by an orange layered icon
- **Diagnostics:** the assessment of skill needs (signified by a clipboard with a diagnostic waveform
- **Monitoring student progress:** response to intervention (signified by a magnifying glass)

Arrows connect all elements in a cyclical process, showing continuous progress monitoring and instructional adjustments.

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