

Series Articles

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Moving from Selection to Implementation

Once you have selected your math materials, the next step is implementation planning. High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) must be used consistently and effectively across your district to make the desired impact. Preparing for this requires more than just distributing materials to classrooms; it involves setting clear expectations for materials use, providing comprehensive professional learning, and establishing systems of support at both the district and school levels. Focusing on these foundational elements in the early stages of implementation will not only support a successful curriculum launch, but also create the conditions for long-term success.

Key Actions to Support Initial Implementation



Set Expectations for Materials and Clearly Define Roles

- Clearly communicate roles and responsibilities to all staff involved in implementation, including district leaders, administrators, teachers, and educational partners.
- Establish guidelines for consistent materials use and systems of support.



Invest in Professional Learning Across All Levels of Your System

- Engage in curriculum-based professional learning with district leaders, administrators, teachers, and support staff.
- Provide initial and ongoing training tailored to each role.



Set Up Teachers for Success

- Make sure your teachers have everything they need to fully implement the curriculum, including all necessary materials and adequate time in student schedules.



Expectations for Materials Use

When you adopt high-quality math materials, you want people to use them. That's why it's important to establish and communicate clear expectations for their use in classrooms. Building investment in the materials and their use will be easier if stakeholders like teachers, administrators, and district leaders had been involved in the selection process or had an opportunity to pilot materials.

In the first year of implementation, most districts' expectations are simple: use the curriculum as your primary instructional resource and teach it as intended. This means following the units and lessons, using the books and other resources with students, and doing so consistently. Tools like pacing guides and planning resources can help clarify these expectations and provide meaningful support to teachers and leaders.

Implementation is most likely to succeed when everyone—leaders, teachers, and educational partners—shares expectations for materials use and the required systems support. It is essential to establish clear expectations for professional learning, collaborative planning, observing and monitoring of instruction, coaching for teachers and leaders, and the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Building these systems provides the infrastructure needed for consistent curriculum use and sustained instructional growth.

Designing your implementation process with these expectations in mind can help things go smoothly. But even with careful planning, challenges will arise. Common obstacles include resistance to change among teachers or other stakeholders and competing priorities at the district or school level. Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for your HQIM initiative and proactively addressing anticipated challenges in your district will help keep your implementation on track.

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“That was the one thing we said was non-negotiable—you’re going to use the curriculum as designed.”

- Samantha Holder

Director of Elementary Academics,
Amarillo Independent School
District (TX)

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“What can make [HQIM] a success or not? Having everybody on board and moving in the same direction. That’s critical for implementation because if you have people in the system who are not on board, it’s not going to go anywhere. It’s about making sure everybody in the system has that same understanding.”

- Executive Director of Mathematics and Science, Texas

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Instruction Partners' [Curriculum Support Guide](#) includes support for setting clear expectations and defining roles:

- [Key Action II.3](#) includes guiding questions and steps for determining expectations for materials use.
- [Roles & Responsibilities Matrix](#) provides a template and examples for mapping out implementation roles and responsibilities.



District-Wide Professional Learning

For people to meet the expectations you've set, professional learning is key. Implementing and supporting HQIM requires a significant investment in training for everyone involved. Districts we spoke with emphasized the need for comprehensive, ongoing professional learning that continues through the first several years of implementation.

Planning your professional learning in advance and aligning it with each phase of implementation will help district and school staff receive the support they need, when they need it. Equally important is setting clear expectations for teacher growth and student outcomes, while monitoring progress at every stage. Regular classroom walks, guided by pre-established "look-fors" aligned with goals, provide valuable insight into how teachers are using materials; student work and achievement data reflect student engagement and outcomes. Ongoing data collection at the school and district levels is critical to the success of professional learning, allowing for adjustments and tailoring of coaching and support to the specific needs of leaders, teachers, and students.

When launching your implementation, prioritize building stakeholders' understanding of materials and how they support your district's vision for math instruction. The Executive Director of Mathematics and Science from a district in Texas explains her district's approach: "At the beginning of the year, the big push was making sure everybody across the system had training, to make sure that everybody knew not just the [math] framework, but also the curriculum."

Once district leaders, school leaders, and others have completed initial training on the materials, she stresses focusing on support for materials use in year one: "Hold tight your first year. You have to hold tight to we're doing this and this is the way we're doing it. And then, once people understand the curriculum, in certain situations and places that are ready, then you start going into skillful implementation."

General Implementation Phases

Phase 1 - Materials Launch (*Spring or Summer prior to 1st year of implementation*)

During this phase, stakeholders learn about the materials and how they support the district's vision for high-quality math instruction. District leaders, schools leaders, and teachers also learn how to set up enabling structures and systems that support curriculum implementation.

Phase 2 - Initial Implementation (*Year 1 of implementation*)

Teachers and school sites implementing materials for the first time deepen their understanding of materials and receive regular support for instruction planning and delivery. Leaders and coaches at the district and site level learn how to monitor and support instruction effectively. They collect and respond to initial implementation data through adjustments to professional .

Phase 3 - Ongoing Implementation (*Year 2+ of implementation*)

Progress during the first year of implementation informs foci for professional learning in subsequent years. Teachers and school sites work on strengthening implementation and using data strategically. District and school site leaders use monitoring data to design interventions and additional support.

The most effective professional learning is also role-specific. Districts highlighted the benefits of including the following key stakeholders in professional learning plans, and offered guidance on how to best support those roles during early implementation phases.

- **District and School Leaders:** Focus leaders on learning how HQIM supports the instructional vision, recognizing high-quality instruction, and making decisions that support materials use. One high-leverage activity is to have leaders participate in a lesson from the adopted curriculum as students, and compare that experience with their own teaching. This firsthand experience helps leaders see the shifts in teacher practice and student engagement that HQIM supports.

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“[District leaders] don't need to know the depth of content or the specific instructional practices. They need to know enough to understand what they are calling for and what classrooms should look like.”

- John Drake

Endowed Director of the Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Leadership Collaborative, at the Orange County Department of Education (CA)

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- **Teachers:** Teachers need ample time and support to plan and practice with the materials. Following initial training on the curriculum’s design and use, provide ongoing support for unit and lesson planning using consistent protocols or templates specific to the materials. Whenever possible, schedule grade level-specific training to coincide with the launch of each new unit, allowing teachers time to learn the unit content and practice delivering upcoming lessons. Additionally, give teachers the opportunity to experience model lessons as students and as observers. This enhances their understanding of how the HQIM works to promote engagement and student learning.

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“**Teachers need adequate time to understand the curriculum and get better at using it.**”

- **Dr. Myeisha Phillips**

Interim Vice President of School Transformation, Math, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (CA)

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- **Educational Partners:** Train district and school-site staff who support special populations such as multilingual learners or special education students on relevant aspects of the materials and their use. Providing professional learning to these partners helps to align supports and reinforce the use of HQIM.

Working with an external support provider or your materials provider can assist you in building a strong professional learning plan. Rivet Education’s [Professional Learning Partner Guide](#) provides a vetted list of support providers offering curriculum-aligned professional learning services. Additional tools designed to support districts with mapping implementation and aligned professional learning include:

- Rivet Education’s [Instructional Materials Implementation Tool](#): Offers a detailed roadmap, practical resources, and actionable steps for each stage of the implementation process.
- Instruction Partners’ [Curriculum Support Guide Workbook](#): Provides a comprehensive framework to assist districts in selecting, implementing, and sustaining high-quality instructional materials.



Supporting Teachers

Even with the proper training and support, implementing a new curriculum can be challenging for teachers. To set them up for success, consider additional ways to provide support. Many math HQIM on the market include multiple components such as digital and print versions of teacher and student editions, workbooks, and manipulative kits. Most programs also provide grade-level lists of additional supplies needed for specific units and lessons (e.g., rulers, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, coins). Supplying teachers with all the necessary resources to fully enact the curriculum can be a tremendous support.

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“We bought everything—every manipulative kit, every resource. We did not skimp on one component of the purchase. And that makes a big difference when you’re trying to get people to shift how they’re doing things. If they have to sit there and cut out the 10 frames, it becomes this huge burden instead of, ‘Oh, yeah, here’s my kit, and everything I need is already laminated and ready for me.’ I think that was huge for our teachers.”

- Elizabeth Cutrona

Chief of Staff, Detroit Public Schools Community District (MI)

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Not only does this investment support effective implementation, but it may also increase teachers’ commitment to using the materials.

Amarillo Independent School District (TX) took an additional step by integrating their new math curriculum into digital tools with which teachers were already familiar. Before the school year began, the district’s digital specialists compiled all necessary resources for each lesson online, including any handouts and other materials. They then added tools like Pear Deck and Kami to help teachers collect consistent data from students during each lesson. Having everything accessible in one place greatly supported teacher planning, while using familiar technology enhanced their overall teaching experience.

Another essential factor in implementation support for teachers is ensuring that students’ daily schedules allocate the recommended amount of time for math instruction as outlined by the materials. Without sufficient time to fully deliver daily lessons, teacher investment in the materials may diminish and implementation effectiveness may suffer. District leaders can help by sharing sample schedules and guiding school leaders to design master schedules that prioritize adequate instructional time.

As you work to establish the conditions for successful implementation, it’s important to consider the key factors that influence both teacher and student success. The following questions may be helpful to reflect on as you build out your plans for implementation.

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As you work to establish the conditions for successful implementation, it's important to consider the key factors that influence both teacher and student success. The following questions may be helpful to reflect on as you build out your plans for implementation.

Key Questions



1. What are your expectations for curriculum use, and how will you effectively communicate them to stakeholders?
2. How can you engage leaders, teachers, and other educational partners to share and commit to your implementation vision?
3. What are your specific goals for leaders, teachers, and students during the first year of implementation, and how will you measure progress toward those goals?
4. How will you organize district and school-level staff to support the achievement of your implementation goals?
5. What professional learning opportunities do district leaders, school leaders, and teachers need to be successful in year one?
6. How can you leverage available resources such as time, technology, and personnel to give your teachers the most meaningful support?
7. How much instructional time should be allocated to support full implementation of the curriculum, and how will you support schools in achieving this?
8. What systems of support will you establish for monitoring progress and making adjustments to your implementation plan?

Making the leap from materials selection to successful implementation requires careful planning and a district-wide commitment. Establishing clear expectations for materials use, building foundational support systems, and providing stakeholders with professional learning and essential resources will create the conditions for a strong launch and initial implementation. Focusing on these critical elements also will set you up for sustained instructional growth with HQIM.