Getting to the CORE

An Evidence-Based Approach to Building Leadership Capacity in Curriculum Implementation

Why Focus on High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)?

As with any other profession in a changing landscape, teaching is constantly adapting practices and tools to a dynamic educational context. With widespread State Standards adoption, educators, publishers, policy makers, and professional service providers are turning to high-quality instructional materials to ensure students meet the new standards. HQIM is a broad umbrella that includes both the techniques of delivering instruction—pedagogy—as well as the content itself—curricula—that are aligned to state standards.[1] High-quality curricula is a relatively inexpensive and effective investment[2] that can play an important role in closing the opportunity gap for low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, and others by ensuring that all students receive the instruction they need to be career and college ready.[3]

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1. Kaufman, Julia H., Sy Doan, and Maria-Paz Fernandez. 2021. *The Rise of Standards-Aligned Instructional Materials for U.S. K-12 Mathematics and English Language Arts Instruction: Findings from the 2021 American Instructional Resources Survey.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

2. Boser, Ulrich, Matthew Chingos, and Chelsea Straus. 2015. *The Hidden Value of Curriculum Reform: Do States and Districts Receive the Most Bang for Their Curriculum Buck?* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

3. EdSource. 2020. "5 Reasons Instructional Materials Matter for Equity." EdSource. Retrieved June 16, 2022 (https://www.edreports.org/resources/article/5-reasons-instructional-materials-matter-for-equity?utm_medium=organic&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=top-5-dec-2021).

The Leadership Role

Our Curriculum Implementation Services utilize proven practices to get your educators the kind of support they need to implement such a wide-ranging change. A key barrier to implementing large-scale change initiatives like curriculum implementation is leader unpreparedness to guide the changes.[4] We therefore start by building leadership capacity around the adopted curricula.[5] Leaders must understand the curriculum's content, both as stand-alone pieces and as part of a coherent whole, to support their educators in its implementation.[6] Additionally, our multiyear leadership support builds leaders' capacity to enhance your entire staff's ability toward independently sustaining curriculum implementation over time. Our emphasis around working collaboratively with you is driven by research that shows that when professional-learning providers like ourselves partner with dedicated educational leaders like superintendents and principals to implement changes, your teams are more likely to implement research and research-based practices throughout your systems.[7]

> *"Leaders must cultivate wide and deep participation among staff to effectively change teaching practices."*

Leadership on its own cannot implement curriculum, however. Leaders must cultivate wide and deep participation among staff to effectively change teaching practices.[8] This is especially important because resistance to and uncertainty about changes can inhibit effective implementation.[9] Professional development that engages many teachers versus servicing a single teacher are important for encouraging colleagues to work through how they can immediately implement and adapt the learnings to their classrooms.[10] Moreover, teacher learning grows when leaders use formal opportunities and touchpoints like school leadership teams and/or professional learning teams to continue understanding where their team is in the implementation process and how leaders can support them to move to the next stage.[11] Ongoing formal opportunities that each last longer than a short workshop and continue over semesters and school years promote teachers'

4. National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. 2020. *High-Quality Curriculum Implementation: Connecting What to Teach with How to Teach It.* Santa Monica, CA: Author.

5. Reeves, Doug. 2006. *The Learning Leader: How to Focus School Improvement for Better Results.* ASCD.; Hirsh, Stephanie. 2009. 4 Cornerstones of Professional Learning: Fundamental Principles Pave the Way for Educators' Actions. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.; NIET 2020.

6. Supovitz, Jonathan, Ryan Fink, and Bobbi Newman. 2016. "From the Inside In: Common Core Knowledge and Communication Within Schools." AERA Open 2(3): 1-18.; NIET 2020.

7. Honig, Meredith I., Nitya Venkateswaran, and Patricia McNeil. 2017. "Research Use as Learning: The Case of Fundamental Change in School District Central Offices." *American Educational Research Journal* 54(5): 938–971.

8. Reeves, Douglas B. 2012. "Envision a Better Future." *American School Board Journal* May: 42–43.

9. Coburn, Cynthia E. 2004. "Beyond Decoupling: Rethinking the Relationship between the Institutional Environment and the Classroom." *Sociology of Education* 77(3): 211–244.

10. Garet, Michael S., Andrew C. Porter, Laura Desimone, Beatrice F. Birman, and Kwang Suk Yoon. 2001. "What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results from a National Sample of Teachers." *American Educational Research Journal* 38(4): 915–945; Penuel, William R., Barry J. Fishman, Ryoko Yamaguchi, and Lawrence P. Gallagher. 2007. "What Makes Professional Development Effective? Strategies That Foster Curriculum Implementation." *American Educational Research Journal* 44(4): 921–958; Desimone, Laura M. 2011. "A Primer of Effective Professional Development." *Phi Delta Kappan* 92(6): 68–71.

11. NIET 2020.; Learning Forward. 2018. *High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity.* Oxford,

self-reported learning[12] and better fidelity to the program. [13] That is why we focus on you supporting groups of teachers to implement your new curricula throughout Years 2 and 3 of our program.

We not only help educators set up systems to support continued internal learning around HQIM implementation, but we also focus on making sure all members of your team understand your new curriculum's resources and how to effectively and impactfully leverage them. Publishers cannot anticipate all the challenges educators face when implementing their curricula,[14] so we make it our duty to understand your teams' unique situations to help troubleshoot any issues that may arise. Research shows that professional learning focused on content is especially associated with increased teacher learning.[15] Moreover, we work to make sure each member of your team aligns their instruction to your educational program's core grade-level content and in continuity with each other's work throughout the system,[16] as research shows that coherence between professional development opportunities, teaching practice, and the overall curriculum is critical for effective professional learning to occur.[17] We also understand—and research shows[18]—that curriculum implementation is not a one-size-fits-all process. We make sure to understand your unique context and mold our offerings to match them to make sure your team gets the most out of our services.

The Importance of Collective Efficacy in Curriculum Implementation

Ultimately, we aim to strengthen teachers' collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is characterized by organizational members' beliefs that their colleagues can take some series of actions to accomplish goal(s) together.[19] In education, this looks like teachers who believe that they can take steps together to improve student achievement.[20] Collective teacher efficacy challenges deficit-oriented thinking— the belief that learning issues are a product of student problems[21]—that can forestall curriculum implementation with an empowered view of educators who can better their practice to work towards common goals that increase their students' learning. Case studies illustrate how instructional leaders such as principals can prepare teacher-leaders to draw on their experiences evaluating data and making changes to their practice to influence their colleagues to take similar steps, as well as improve each

12. Garet et al. 2001.

13. Penuel et al. 2007.

14. NIET 2020.

15. Garet et al. 2001; Penuel et al. 2007.

16. TNTP. 2022. *Instructional Coherence: A Key to High-Quality Learning Acceleration for All Students.* New York.

17. Desimone 2011; Garet et al. 2001; Penuel et al. 2007.

18. Kennedy, Mary M. 2016. "How Does Professional Development Improve Teaching?" *Review of Educational Research 86* (4): 945–980.; NIET 2020.

19. Bandura, Albert. 1997. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control.* New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.

20. Goddard, Roger D., Wayne K. Hoy, and Anita Woolfolk Hoy. 2000. "Collective Teacher Efficacy: Its Meaning, Measure, and Impact on Student Achievement." *American Educational Research Journal* 37(2): 479–507; Goddard, Roger D., Wayne K. Hoy, and Anita Hoy Woolfolk. 2004. "Collective Efficacy Beliefs: Theoretical Developments, Empirical Evidence, and Future Directions." *Educational Researcher* 33(3): 3–13.

21. Pak, Katie, Polikoff, Morgan S., Desimone, Laura M., and Garcia, Erica Saldivar. 2020. "The Adaptive Challenges of Curriculum Implementation: Insights for Educational Leaders Driving Standards-Based Reform." AERA Open 6(2): 1–15.

others' beliefs in their colleagues' capacities to teach their students.[22] By shifting focus from deficit-thinking about what educators and their students lack toward what educators can accomplish together to support their students, teachers raise their shared expectations for collaboration, set higher goals for their teaching, and attend to actionable strategies and actions to improve student learning.[23] Most importantly, research consistently finds that teachers' shared beliefs are more significantly associated with better student outcomes than the students' socioeconomic status.[24] In sum, when teachers are supported by leaders to understand their curricula's details and connections and create frequent opportunities to help each other overcome challenges in delivering new standards-aligned instruction, their confidence in their collective abilities to impact student achievement increases. Teachers can then have the kinds of impacts they believe they can make.

Implementing a new curriculum, especially one that includes high-quality instructional materials, is not easy. Our Curriculum Implementation Services' support for your leaders to develop continuous improvement systems and practices alongside regular professional learning. Focusing on cultivating your team's content expertise will strengthen their collective beliefs in each other's power to effectively serve their students. And when teachers focus those shared beliefs through access to and understanding of the same high-quality materials, greater achievement for all students is likely.

22. Brinson, Dana and Steiner, Lucy. 2007. *Building Collective Efficacy: How Leaders Inspire Teachers to Achieve.* Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

23. Donohoo, Jenni, Hattie, John, and Eells, Rachel. 2018. "The Power of Collective Efficacy." Educational Leadership: 41–44; Donohoo, Jenni and Steven T. Katz. 2019. *Quality Implementation: Leveraging Collective Efficacy to Make "What Works" Actually Work.* Dallas, TX: Corwin.

24. Bandura, Albert. 1993. "Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning." Educational Psychologist 28(2): 117–148; Eells, Rachel Jean. 2011. *Meta-Analysis of the Relationship Between Collective Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement.* Dissertation; Goddard, Roger D., Wayne K. Hoy, and Anita Woolfolk Hoy. 2000. "Collective Teacher Efficacy: Its Meaning, Measure, and Impact on Student Achievement." *American Educational Research Journal* 37(2): 479–507; Tschannen-Moran, Megan and M. Barr. 2004. "Fostering Student Learning: The Relationship of Collective Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement." *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 3(3): 189–209.