

# Curriculum Adoption and Implementation

## Guidance for System Leaders Making Instructional Material Decisions

### Purpose

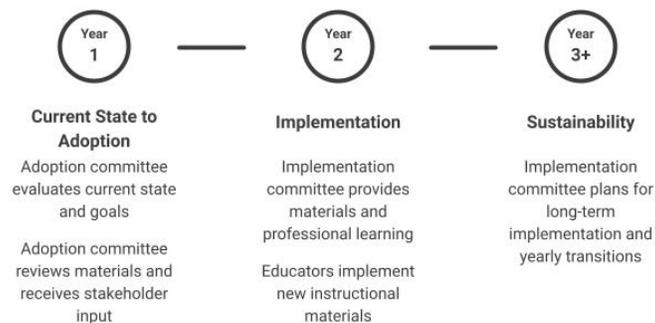
The purpose of this guide is to provide clear steps and procedures for system leaders while evaluating, adopting, and implementing instructional materials, typically a textbook or web-based resource. It is intended for English language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, computer science, comprehensive health and physical education materials. Since this guide is not written for any individual content area, additional resources are provided in Appendices C and D. If more support is required, please contact the [Standards and Instructional Support office](#) at the Colorado Department of Education.

### Process Vision and Description

In this guide, we define **curriculum adoption** as the process in which instructional materials are selected for purchase and **curriculum implementation** as the widespread and ongoing use of instructional materials within an educational system. The following Core Components and action steps are designed to support an effective curriculum adoption and implementation. These components are most effective when implemented together and in order.

1. [Determine Current and Ideal State with a Communal Lens](#)
2. [Research, Evaluate and Analyze Materials](#)
3. [Implement with a Systems Lens](#)
4. [Create a Sustainable System](#)

Figure 1. Sample Timeline of Curriculum Adoption and Implementation



Year 1: Current State to Adoption - Adoption committee evaluates current state and goals. Adoption committee reviews materials and receives stakeholder input.

Year 2: Implementation - Implementation committee provides materials and professional learning. Educators implement new instructional materials.

Year 3+: Sustainability - Implementation committee plans for long-term implementation and yearly transitions.

### Key Elements

These elements are often overlooked but are key to the success of adopting new instructional materials.

- **Collect stakeholder input** – Curriculum adoption and implementation depend on stakeholders' voices being honored throughout this process.
- **Ensure educator support and collaboration** – Collaborative planning leads to stronger teaching communities and student learning outcomes.
- **Provide ongoing professional learning** – Regular professional learning tied to instructional materials leads to continuous implementation and reflection.



## Core Components, Elements & Action Steps

The Core Components and associated action steps presented below should be implemented sequentially, as each relies on the previous component.

### Core Component 1: Determine Current and Ideal State with a Communal Lens

*To develop an adoption plan, schools must be aware of their current state around instructional practice and materials. It is important to analyze current practices, policies and procedures to determine goals that will drive improved school systems. It is equally important to receive input and feedback from as many stakeholders as possible.*

1. Assemble a diverse adoption committee.
  - a. Identify stakeholders to participate in the adoption process, ideally including teachers, instructional coaches, interventionists, content specialists, administrators, families/caregivers, students, community-based organizations and community members. People with knowledge of how special populations of students learn (multilingual learners, students with Individualized Education Programs, gifted students, etc.) and how special programs run (International Baccalaureate, dual language immersion, etc.) should also be included. It is beneficial to include representatives from the grade bands above and below the adoption band to support coherence.
2. Identify restrictions and parameters.
  - a. Determine factors which may impact the adoption process including policy, budget, technology capabilities, language options (e.g., available in Spanish), adoption timeline, staff capacity, available instructional minutes and the decision-making processes and procedures.
  - b. Look at school-, district- and state-level data (which may include but is not limited to achievement data, growth data, graduation rates and dropout rates) to determine where there may be gaps in which students are being supported by current resources and systems.
  - c. Develop a district-based rubric with which to evaluate instructional materials to ensure alignment to district goals and to support the district's students and community. Sample rubrics for several content areas can be found in Appendices C and D.
  - d. Decide how to collect input from stakeholders throughout the adoption process. This may include (but is not limited to) surveys, round tables or focus groups.
3. Develop a vision.
  - a. Examine the current state of instruction in the school or district. Engage with teachers to determine current teaching models and practices and instructional strategies and routines.
  - b. Identify a content-specific teaching philosophy for the school or district. This may include professional learning for committee members around best practices and/or a reflection on and a needs analysis of the current educational system. Best practices may vary depending on the content, so many professional organizations provide guidance. Several of these organizations can be found in Appendices C and D.
  - c. Build a roadmap for making an informed decision. Determine the process to choose materials to consider, the tools required to evaluate options, and the evidence required to make a final decision. Decide if there are any elements or features that are required or are dealbreakers when considering materials. The adoption team may develop a rubric for evaluating the various materials based on specific school or district needs.



## Core Component 2: Research, Evaluate and Analyze Materials

*When determining which materials to adopt, it is important to consider the needs of your student population. It is also crucial to ensure instructional materials are aligned to the [Colorado Academic Standards](#) and provide the desired support for students, teachers and families/caregivers.*

1. Identify options.
  - a. Determine which materials to review. This may include using a district rubric and/or referencing state lists or national repositories. Elevate teacher voices by providing a platform for educators to request specific instructional materials be reviewed.
  - b. Look at detailed reports on each set of instructional materials and not just at the overall score to ensure alignment to the shared teaching philosophy and best practices.
2. Review materials.
  - a. Submit to the district's technology team to ensure compliance with student privacy policies and compatibility with current technology systems.
  - b. Practice using the district rubric to calibrate its use, perhaps on current or past resources.
  - c. Request samples from publishers. Set up presentations with publishers to walk reviewers through the instructional materials and answer questions. Use the district rubric to analyze these samples.
  - d. Consider what training is available for teachers throughout the life of the curriculum implementation.
  - e. Identify which instructional materials to consider for a deeper evaluation. This may include a short trial or longer pilot of materials. Any pilot should include the same training teachers would receive if the materials were adopted. (Families/caregivers should be informed that their students will be using a new resource during a trial or pilot.) Collecting data around any pilot is essential. This may include feedback from teachers, administrators, families/caregivers and students.
3. Collect stakeholder input.
  - a. Collect feedback from stakeholder groups including teachers, administrators, students and families/caregivers. If special programs (e.g., IB, dual language immersion, etc.) will be using these materials, feedback from those programs should be included. Input can be collected synchronously (e.g., community nights) or asynchronously (e.g., surveys).
4. Adopt instructional materials.
  - a. Use the defined decision-making process determined in [Core Component 1](#) to make a final selection. Follow district policy to finalize the decision.
  - b. Communicate the decision and rationale with all stakeholders.
  - c. Work with the district's procurement team to complete the purchase. (It is often cheaper to purchase multiple years at a time.)



### Core Component 3: Implement with a Systems Lens

*To develop an implementation plan, schools must develop goals and infrastructure for educator support and collaboration. Collaborative teaching environments lead to stronger, more effective implementation of best teaching practices.*

1. Assemble a diverse implementation committee.
  - a. Identify stakeholders to participate in the implementation process, potentially including teachers, instructional coaches, interventionists, content specialists and/or administrators. School-level voices should be included. This group should meet regularly (e.g., weekly, monthly) throughout the implementation period.
2. Develop implementation goals and metrics.
  - a. Revisit the shared teaching philosophy developed before the adoption (in [Core Component 1](#)) and make any necessary adjustments. Collaborate to determine shared instructional goals.
  - b. Define what a successful implementation will look like, action steps to get there and key people in the educational system to support the implementation.
  - c. Identify which metrics, tools and methods will be used to measure the impact of implementing the instructional materials.
3. Prepare materials.
  - a. With the publishers and the office staff in each school building, prepare a distribution plan for physical materials. Teaching materials need to be available for training, and student materials must be on-site to begin implementation when planned.
  - b. If applicable, work with the district's technology team to ensure all online elements are synchronized with necessary digital systems (e.g., learning management systems [LMS]) before teacher training and implementation.
4. Plan for and provide professional learning to all educators.
  - a. Provide job-embedded materials training to all educators who support the content, including but not limited to classroom, English learning development (ELD), exceptional student services (ESS), and gifted and talented (GT or TAG) teachers; paraprofessionals; instructional coaches; and administrators.
  - b. Administrators and instructional coaches should be trained in how to support teachers' implementation and how to provide regular feedback.
5. Define and communicate expectations.
  - a. Determine and communicate expectations for implementation, including grading and assessments. Articulate which decisions are districtwide and which are left up to the school or teacher.

## Core Component 4: Create a Sustainable System

*To ensure continued implementation of instructional materials, structures must be in place to provide ongoing training and resources to all staff for the duration of the implementation of the adopted instructional materials.*

1. Revisit vision and goals.
  - a. Analyze implementation data and reflect on progress.
  - b. Regularly review the shared teaching philosophy and instructional vision goals. The implementation team should make any necessary adjustments as needed.
2. Develop a plan for onboarding new staff.
  - a. Plan for how new staff will be trained and supported, including support for mid-year hires and teachers with alternative/emergency licenses.
3. Provide ongoing professional learning.
  - a. Professional learning should be iterative, collaborative and responsive to educators' needs based on walkthroughs, stakeholder feedback and other data. Offer training (including modeling lessons, guidance for supporting special populations and engaging in collaborative planning and lesson study) multiple times each year to both provide support for new hires and continue the professional development of veteran staff.
  - b. When possible, build internal leadership by developing a train-the-trainer model of professional development. Not only can this be more budget-friendly, but it also builds a sense of community by demonstrating that educators are respected and valued as leaders.
  - c. Differentiate educator training to ensure each staff member is learning and growing. One way to structure this might be to create implementation cohorts.
  - d. Develop a system to track who has received each training provided.
4. Create a system for material and technology rollover.
  - a. Identify who manages keeping track of the details and timelines of materials adoptions in the district. Be sure to have a central location where all this information is housed. This ensures ease during personnel transitions.
  - b. Plan for how materials will be redistributed as necessary and replenished when lost or destroyed. Determine who (school or district as well as specific personnel) oversees the ordering of and paying for materials.
  - c. Work with the district technology team to update digital systems when new students enroll or when new classes begin, including updating contracts to comply with student privacy policies.
5. Develop a plan for when materials sunset.
  - a. Consider how long the instructional materials will be available and applicable. This may be due to publication timelines, budgeting restraints or [changes to state standards](#).
  - b. Identify the necessary steps to prepare the educational system to eventually repeat this adoption and implementation process when needed.



## Appendix A

### Guidance for Action Plan Implementation

#### *Preparation*

- If purchasing or contracting with external providers for curricular resources or professional development, ensure there are sufficient funds earmarked to cover these ongoing costs.
- Installation—The following will need to be in place before the school year begins:
  - School schedule and staff assignments allow instructional coaches and/or administrators to observe and meet with teachers regularly.
  - Digital technology is set up to make it readily accessible by teachers, instructional coaches and leaders.
  - All physical materials are delivered to classrooms.
  - The implementation team has met to fully plan for curriculum implementation throughout the year.

#### *Staffing and Teams*

- Establish adoption and implementation teams that involve diverse stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, support staff, families/caregivers, students, community-based organizations and community members. It is beneficial to include representatives from the grade bands above and below the adoption band to support coherence.
- Classroom teachers will be the primary users of instructional materials. They will need support from instructional coaches and/or content specialists to reinforce key practices and from school leadership to ensure adequate resources and capacity are available to implement new practices.
- If teachers, instructional coaches and/or leaders are not invested in or open to adopting a curriculum, consider developing a strong change management plan to build a healthy culture in your school or district around a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

#### *Training and Resources*

- **Structures and Systems:** Teachers' schedules should include designated time for training and collaboration.
- **Routines and Practices:** Clear expectations will help teachers and instructional coaches to implement the instructional materials as intended.
- **Assessment and Intervention:** Consider your intervention and assessment programs. Work to ensure there is alignment between all instructional programs and practices. If any programs or tools are redundant, consider which one(s) to eliminate to cut costs.
- **Coaching:** Consider having instructional coaches focus observations and coaching meetings on implementation of instructional materials.
- **Professional Development:**
  - Training helps with buy-in and implementation success. If teachers do not know how to use their instructional materials, they will not use them.
  - Classroom teachers and instructional coaches will need training before and during the school year to develop their capacity in lesson delivery to meet the needs of all learners.
  - School leadership will need training in the instructional materials to effectively monitor and support teachers' implementation.



- Professional development has the greatest impact when it explicitly connected to curriculum implementation. Any training on practices not included in the instructional materials should always be tied back to how to integrate the practices with the materials.
- Developing a train-the-trainer model where teachers in the district have the chance to build their leadership skills. This develops community and trust by showing that teachers are valued for their expertise.

#### *Progress Monitoring*

- Leaders' schedules should include time to consistently monitor and support teachers' implementation of the instructional materials. Leaders should routinely observe classrooms to ensure teachers are delivering instruction in line with the implementation expectations, and they should provide feedback to teachers individually and to collaborative teams, as needed, to ensure continuous improvement.

#### *Change Management*

- If teachers, instructional coaches and school leaders are not already open to adopting a new curricular resource, you will need a carefully designed change management approach to get them invested in the new instructional materials.
- When a new set of instructional materials are adopted, consider removing all materials from the prior adoption from all educational settings.

#### *Timing of Adoptions*

- It is recommended to make different content adoptions during different years to spread out funding and staff capacity. (Be aware of the capacity of educators who support more than one content area.)



## Appendix B

### Sample Adoption Plan

*The following Sample Implementation Plan assumes that a school does not currently have a unified resource. Note also that the suggested dates provided are approximate ranges for the given activities. A true action plan should specify precise dates and date-ranges for each activity.*

1. Determine Current and Ideal State with a Communal Lens.
  - a. Develop a materials adoption plan (*August, Adoption Committee*)
    - i. Identify restrictions and parameters.
    - ii. Develop a vision.
    - iii. Plan for committee meetings and distribution of work.
2. Research, Evaluate and Analyze Materials.
  - a. Evaluate instructional materials (*September to October, Adoption Committee*)
    - i. Review instructional materials.
    - ii. Narrow options down to 1-3 curricular materials.
  - b. Prepare for a pilot (*November to December, Adoption Committee and pilot teachers*)
    - i. Choose a subset of teachers to pilot the instructional materials.
    - ii. Provide training and resources.
  - c. Pilot materials (*January to March, Adoption Committee and pilot teachers*)
    - i. Teachers implement materials for a set period of time.
  - d. Collect data (*March, Adoption Committee*)
    - i. Survey teachers, administrators, parents/guardians and students who participated in the pilot.
  - e. Adopt materials (*April, Adoption Committee*)
    - i. Use the decision-making process to decide.
    - ii. Communicate the decision and rationale with all stakeholders.
3. Implement with a Systems Lens.
  - a. Develop a materials implementation plan (*May, Implementation Committee*)
    - i. Revisit the vision.
    - ii. Develop goals.
    - iii. Plan for committee meetings and distribution of work.
  - b. Prepare for implementation (*August, Implementation Committee*)
    - i. Deliver physical materials to classrooms.
    - ii. Set up necessary technology.
    - iii. Train all educators.
    - iv. Communicate expectations.
  - c. Implement materials (*August to May, instructional staff*)
  - d. Reflect and adjust (*August to May, Implementation Committee*)
    - i. Reflect on progress quarterly, adjusting goals and timelines as needed.
    - ii. Provide regular support to educators.



## Appendix C

### Content-Specific Resources by Component

#### *Component 1*

##### Sample Rubrics

When using a rubric to evaluate a resource, the rubric should be designed based on local needs. The following sample rubrics are provided as resources to help support the development of district-driven evaluation tools.

- English Language Arts: [Selecting Scientifically and Evidence-Based Instructional Programs](#) (CDE)
- Mathematics: [Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (NCSM)
- Science: [NextGen TIME](#)
- Social Studies: [Criteria for Selecting High Quality Instructional Materials for Social Studies](#)
- Comprehensive Health: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (CDC HECAT)
- Physical Education: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (CDC PECAT)

##### Professional Organizations

These content-specific organizations provide access to current research and best practices which may make them useful for developing a content-specific vision.

- English Language Arts: [National Council of Teachers of English](#) (NCTE)
- Mathematics: [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#) (NCTM)
- Science: [Council of State Science Supervisors](#) (CSSS)
- Social Studies: [National Council for the Social Studies](#) (NCSS)
- Computer Science: [Computer Science Teachers Association](#) (CSTA)

#### *Component 2*

##### State or National Repositories

- English Language Arts: [READ Act Advisory List](#) (CDE)
- Mathematics: [Mathematics Curriculum Resource Bank](#) (CDE)
- Science: [EdReports](#) (This is a useful resource for seeing what is available. However, the ratings do not always provide a thorough picture of what a program has to offer.)
- Computer Science: [Computer Science Resource Bank](#) (CDE), [CS for All Curriculum Directory](#)

**NOTE:** Many content areas offer free resources backed by reputable sources which could also be considered for review.

For more information on first-, second- and third-person curriculum reviews, see [Appendix E](#).



## Appendix D

### Content-Specific Resources by Content

#### *English Language Arts*

- [Selecting Scientifically and Evidence-Based Instructional Programs](#) (CDE)
- [National Council of Teachers of English](#) (NCTE)
- [READ Act Advisory List](#) (CDE)

#### *Mathematics*

- [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#) (NCTM)
- [Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (NCSM)
- [Mathematics Curriculum Resource Bank](#) (CDE)

#### *Science*

- [Council of State Science Supervisors](#) (CSSS)
- [Critical Features of Instructional Materials Design for Today's Science Standards: A Resource for Science Curriculum Developers and the Education Field](#) (WestEd)
- [NextGen TIME](#)
- [EdReports](#)

#### *Social Studies*

- [National Council for the Social Studies](#) (NCSS)
- [Criteria for Selecting High Quality Instructional Materials for Social Studies](#)

#### *Comprehensive Health and Physical Education*

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (CDC HECAT)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool](#) (CDC PECAT)

#### *Computer Science*

- [Computer Science Teachers Association](#) (CSTA)
- [Computer Science Resource Bank](#) (CDE)
- [CS for All Curriculum Directory](#)



## Appendix E

### First-Person Curriculum Reviews

First-person curriculum reviews are reviews you do yourself. To be successful, these reviews require the involvement of a diverse set of stakeholders, people with content and curriculum design expertise, an achievable timeline and tools for setting and applying criteria for judging a variety of materials. One such sets of tools is the [Materials Alignment Toolkit](#). Other content-specific tools can be found in [Appendix C](#).

The [Materials Alignment Toolkit](#) was developed by a partnership between [Student Achievement Partners](#), [Achieve](#), the [Council of Chief State School Officers \(CCSSO\)](#), and the [Council of the Great City Schools](#). The toolkit includes a suite of tools:

- IMET for evaluating the alignment of a comprehensive textbook or textbook series
- GIMET-QR for evaluating the quality of instructional materials at each grade level
- EQuIP quality review rubric for evaluating the alignment of lessons, units, and modules
- EQuIP student work protocol for relating student work to the quality and alignment of materials
- AET for evaluating the alignment of grade- or course-level assessment materials
- CCSSO Principles for aligning state summative assessments
- Assessment passage and item quality criteria checklists to evaluate the alignment of assessment items and tasks
- ELL framework for establishing a rigorous and coherent program to serve emerging bilingual students

### Second-Person Curriculum Reviews

Second-person curriculum reviews are reviews conducted by the publisher or creator of the curriculum materials themselves. You should use these with caution (if at all), as they can rely on biased methodology and small, handpicked samples chosen to skew results in the publisher's favor. Sometimes a publisher will partner with an external researcher or organization to do this research for them. However, if the report is self-funded, self-published and not subject to peer review, you should be wary of letting claims made in these reviews outweigh better evidence from higher quality first- and third-person reviews.

Case in point: [Polikoff \(2015\)](#) conducted an independent, peer-reviewed study of the alignment of seven 4th grade mathematics textbooks and compared that alignment to each publisher's claims of alignment, using an alignment methodology that itself had been researched and shown to be the best-known way to measure alignment. Although alignment to standards varied across the seven textbooks, in every case there were meaningful misalignments that cast doubts on any publisher's claim that their materials are fully aligned to academic standards.

### Third-Person Curriculum Reviews

Third-person curriculum reviews are conducted by people unaffiliated with either the school or the publisher of the materials. Ideally, these are conducted by people who are unbiased, knowledgeable about teaching and the design of instructional materials and guided by a clear set of criteria designed to comprehensively assess the alignment and quality of curriculum materials. Three such sources of third-person reviews are [EdReports](#), the [What Works Clearinghouse](#) and [Evidence for ESSA](#).



[EdReports](#) is an independent non-profit that publishes reviews of K-12 curriculum materials. EdReports assesses English language arts, mathematics and science materials for alignment to content standards, coherence and usability as well as content-specific best practices. Users of EdReports should become familiar with [EdReports' methodology](#), not just their ratings, and understand that a resource's alignment to standards is not the same thing as evidence of student achievement.

The [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#) is a service of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), part of the U.S. Department of Education. The WWC summarizes rigorous, peer-reviewed research about the effects that educational materials and programs have on student achievement. Users of the WWC should be familiar with the [WWC's methodology](#), not just their ratings, and understand that the WWC only considers select research studies and those studies may not reflect the newest versions of materials or their alignment to the newest academic standards.

The [Evidence for ESSA](#) website is produced by the Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) at Johns Hopkins University and is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The site is similar to the What Works Clearinghouse, but it relies on a different set of studies meeting a different set of criteria. Users of the Evidence for ESSA website should understand that the identification of evidence as "strong," "moderate" and "promising" is determined by the type of study (experimental, quasi-experimental or correlational), not the size of the effect the program or materials have on student achievement.



## Appendix F

### The Importance of Curriculum-Based Professional Development

Recent studies show that fewer than half of teachers have gotten multi-day professional development focused on their curriculum materials, and only 6% of teachers report having gotten such PD more than a few times (Polikoff, et al., 2020). Although there is a wealth of wonderful PD in mathematics that isn't focused on any one set of materials, it can be very efficient and powerful for teachers to receive curriculum-based professional development. In their publication, [\*The Elements: Transforming Teaching Through Curriculum-Based Professional Learning\*](#), authors Jim Short and Stephanie Hirsh of the Carnegie Corporation of New York describe it as:

*Curriculum-based professional learning invites teachers to participate in the same sort of rich, inquiry-based learning that new academic standards require. Such learning places the focus squarely on curriculum. It is rooted in ongoing, active experiences that prompt teachers to change their instructional practices, expand their content knowledge, and challenge their beliefs. This stands in contrast to traditional teacher training, which typically relays a static mass of information that teachers selectively apply to existing practice.*

In *The Elements*, the authors describe six fundamental shifts from traditional teacher professional development to curriculum-based professional learning:

1. A shift from being *focused on topics or themes* to being **focused on instructional materials with specific teaching strategies.**
2. A shift from *one-time workshops, usually when school is closed* to **repeated sessions, coaching, and feedback opportunities during teachers' regular workdays.**
3. A shift from *teachers grouped by school* to **teachers grouped by the curriculum they are using.**
4. A shift from *information shared in lectures, presentations, or Q&A discussions* to **active learning experiences, such as practicing instruction or participating in lessons as students.**
5. A shift from *coaching and feedback reserved mostly for new or struggling teachers* to **curriculum-focused coaching and feedback for all teachers.**
6. A shift from *selected teachers receiving support for using new curriculum materials* to **all teachers using new materials participating in curriculum-based professional learning.**



## Sources

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