



High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for Math

EXCEL/NED POLICY PLAYBOOK
MODEL POLICY - 2026

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Introduction

The materials teachers use in math classrooms directly shape instruction and learning, which is why states should enact strong policies and facilitate implementation of those policies to ensure every teacher and student has access to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). This HQIM Playbook defines high-quality instructional materials; outlines the essential processes for selecting and recommending them; and provides implementation recommendations informed by practitioner and reviewer experience.

Model Policy: Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials

Policy cannot drive meaningful change unless it is implemented with fidelity. States that provide support for implementation realize the biggest impact on student outcomes. This playbook recommends the following steps and processes to ensure selection, adoption and implementation of HQIM. We recommend that states develop:

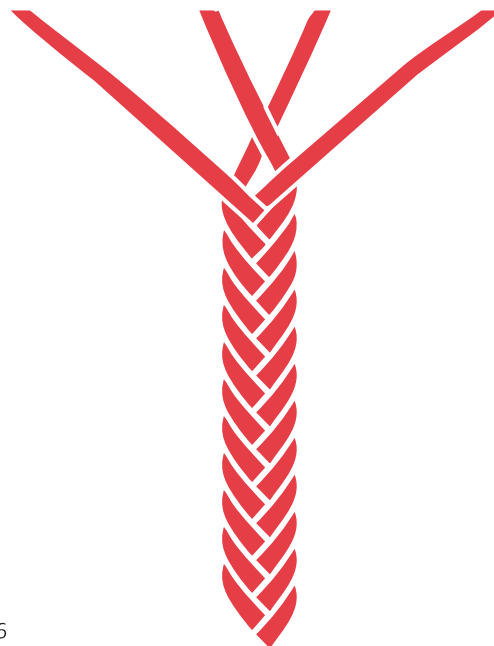
- **A clear definition** of high-quality instructional materials for math,
- **A sound rubric** for evaluating the quality of materials,
- **A clear and transparent review process** for the review of instructional materials, including:
- **A system for vendors** to register their materials for review, which may include a fee to cover the costs associated with running the instructional materials review process (e.g., stipends for the reviewers);
- **A state instructional materials review committee** to evaluate the materials that vendors submit;
- **Tools and resources**, such as a state-approved list of HQIM, rubrics with criteria for district-level evaluation of materials, guidance and information about HQIM and recommendations for curriculum-based professional learning to help districts choose and implement high-quality materials;
- **Training for district leaders, math coaches and teachers** that builds math knowledge and shows how to use selected materials effectively.

A Clear Definition of HQIM for Math

A first step for any state is clearly defining HQIM. At a minimum, HQIM for math should support the development of the [Four Strands of Math Proficiency](#), align with state math content standards to build both math knowledge and skills and be grounded in coherent learning progressions. Establishing a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality for math materials helps educators make informed decisions when selecting, adopting and implementing. This definition also ensures that all stakeholders understand the goals and expectations for HQIM in supporting student learning.

- Math-specific high-quality instructional materials should:
 - **Align to state math standards** so students build the [knowledge and skills](#) they need;
 - **Follow clear and logical development of mathematical ideas**, including attention to learning trajectories (typical path of how students develop understanding of a math concept over time) and mathematical accuracy;
 - **Develop the [Four Strands of Mathematical Proficiency](#)**—procedural fluency (the ability to perform math procedures with speed, accuracy, efficiency and flexibility), conceptual understanding (knowing how and why math “works”), real-world problem-solving (connecting math to students’ lives) and productive disposition (seeing math as sensible, useful and worthwhile).

Real-world Problem Solving Procedural Fluency Conceptual Understanding Productive Dispositions



- Materials should also align with the best available research about how students learn math, and vendors should be able to provide evidence that their materials improve student outcomes across demographic groups.
 - For example, there is [evidence](#) that materials that use **objects, pictures and symbols** to help students understand math concepts in different ways—moving from concrete (objects) to representational (pictures) to abstract (symbols)—improve student learning.
- Finally, educator support is a critical component of any high-quality material. Material should:
 - **Help teachers strengthen** their own math knowledge and skills;
 - **Include student examples, common mistakes and different ways to solve problems;**
 - **Use evidence-based teaching methods**, including opportunities for explicit instruction alongside other high-leverage instructional strategies;
 - **Provide supplemental materials** for students who are struggling, on track or who are ready for more challenging material—all connected to the core lessons;
 - **Include professional learning** that helps teachers use the materials effectively, deepen mathematical knowledge and pedagogy and support math instruction planning.

A Sound Rubric for Evaluating the Quality of Materials

After defining HQIM, states must develop criteria to review and recommend materials for a state-approved HQIM list. The rubric should include the essential components from the HQIM definition and additional tools to support a coherent review process. States should:

- **Develop a thorough rubric** to evaluate the specific criteria outlined by the state’s definition of HQIM, which should minimally include:
 - Alignment to state math content standards;
 - Development of the [Four Strands of Math Proficiency](#);
 - A coherent progression of math learning trajectories;
 - Inclusion of intervention materials that support development of grade-level math knowledge;
 - Opportunities for educators to utilize evidence-based approaches to teaching math.
- **Create additional guidance or definitions** to support the rubric and clarify the established criteria.
- **Create and share reviewer training materials** that are accessible and easy to use:
 - Consider short video clips that cover content in focused segments.
 - Format videos to allow users to navigate directly to specific sections.

See [Florida’s Core Questions Rubric and 2026-2027 K-12 Mathematics Specifications](#) for examples of these types of tools.

A Clear and Transparent Review Process for the Adoption of HQIM for Math

Once the HQIM rubric and supporting materials have been created, it is essential for states to implement a clear and transparent HQIM review process. The review process serves as the basis for establishing a state-approved list of HQIM for math. Reviewing instructional materials and providing tools, resources and guidance to districts and schools benefits all stakeholders. Even for states without a mandate requiring the adoption of HQIM, a thorough review process can provide valuable insights, promote greater coherence in instructional quality and support more informed local decision-making.

To help communicate the HQIM review process, states should start by sharing information publicly on the state education agency website about HQIM and specific details for each adoption year, including:

- **HQIM policies and procedures**
- **Applicable state statutes** related to instructional materials
- **Standards review process information**
- **Adoption cycle information**
- **Vendor timelines, contacts and bid reports**
- **Resources**—such as rubrics, standards and criteria—that support the review of the instructional materials.

For examples of HQIM adoption processes, see Florida Department of Education’s [Instructional Materials](#) and the West Virginia Department of Education’s [Adopting Instructional Resources](#).

Many stakeholders and entities are involved in the instructional materials review process. To support transparency, states should communicate timelines and deadlines; provide tools for evaluating materials for evidence and alignment; and define the roles, responsibilities and expectations for each stakeholder entity.

State Education Agency (SEA) Responsibilities

The SEA team will drive the instructional materials review process and serve as the intermediary between the review committee and vendors. SEA team responsibilities include:

- **Identifying the team** to coordinate and facilitate the instructional materials review process.
- **Communicating necessary information** to vendors, such as:
 - Timeline and deadlines for bid submissions
 - HQIM definition
 - Rubric for evaluating instructional materials
 - Instructions for submitting bids and required documentation
 - A system for vendors to send physical materials and tools to the state reviewers
- **Establishing a state instructional materials review committee**, including:
 - Determining the approximate number of state reviewers needed based on the number of bids.
 - Recruiting a variety of stakeholders—K-12 educators, higher education faculty and representatives from math organization—using thoughtful recruitment communication that includes:
 - Encouragement to apply or nominate others using a combination of broad automated emails and personalized communications to expert math educators;
 - Guidance about how participating on this committee affects eligibility for district-level reviewer roles.
 - Recognition of participation barriers and suggested solutions, such as scheduling reviews mindfully during the school year, defining appropriate time commitments per material and providing stipends.

- **Facilitating the instructional materials review and establishing:**
 - Clear expectations, timelines and deadlines for the state instructional materials review committee;
 - Whether reviewers work individually or in small teams;
 - Access to instructional materials for committee members;
 - Automated and personalized communications regarding application submissions, required documents and materials assignments;
 - Live Q & A sessions or check-ins for state reviewers;
 - Training for the review committee that includes synchronous and asynchronous opportunities, covering at a minimum:
 - Criteria ratings
 - State math content standards
 - State HQIM statutes and rules
 - Instructions for submitting the final HQIM review

Vendor Responsibilities

Vendors play a pivotal role in developing a state-approved list of HQIM for math. Vendors must submit bids for specific grade levels and courses, which are then reviewed by the state instructional review committee. Vendor responsibilities include:

- **Abiding by state policies, procedures and statutes** for math materials adoption;
- **Providing a fee** to cover the costs associated with the instructional materials review process;
- **Submitting bids** for math adoption in accordance with the timeline and deadlines established by the state;
- **Providing evidence of alignment** to the rubric and other tools created by the state;
- **Completing the required documentation** for each bid;
- **Providing access** to all instructional materials referenced in the evidence and alignment documents, including supplemental materials, personalized learning platforms and manipulatives (physical or virtual objects such as blocks, counters or digital shapes that students interact with to understand abstract concepts) or instructional tools.

Tools and Resources for District Adoption of HQIM

Once the state-approved list is developed, the most important step in the process is the district-level review to select, adopt and implement HQIM. The state should provide guidance and tools to support districts in the adoption process. Supporting guidance should include at a minimum:

- **Defining HQIM;**
- **Training districts** how to use the rubric and evaluate criteria;
- **Hosting district check-ins and Q & A sessions;**
- **Supporting districts** in submitting selections for adoption to the state agency.

Publicly sharing district-adopted HQIM clarifies the statewide materials landscape and equips state, district and school leaders, as well as educator preparation programs, to better support implementation. This transparency promotes collaboration among districts and allows them to share challenges and strategies to strengthen HQIM use. It also provides accountability for parents and guardians.

States should consider requiring districts to publicly post an annual report of the instructional materials they adopt. Even without such a mandate, state education agencies can collect data on each district's adopted math materials and use it to create a statewide visualization, such as [Mississippi's HQIM heat map](#), which shares HQIM information publicly. Doing so promotes transparency, highlights adoption trends and can motivate districts to prioritize HQIM.

Funding and Support for HQIM Implementation

Allocating funding for HQIM demonstrates an investment in quality content and assignments to support teaching and learning. States should consider funding mechanisms to incentivize district adoption of HQIM, including:

- **Creating competitive grant programs** for districts selecting, purchasing or implementing HQIM;
- **Developing direct funding incentives** to districts after the adoption of HQIM for professional learning and technical assistance;
- **Providing implementation support and coaching models** for educators in districts that have adopted HQIM;
- **Offering stipends or continuing education credits** to deepen educator knowledge and foster collaboration necessary for implementing the HQIM;
- **Supporting intensive math professional development** that builds educators' math content knowledge and strengthens the use of evidence-based instructional practices aligned to the HQIM.

Adopting HQIM for Math is one of the 11 fundamental principles of *ExcelinEd's Comprehensive K-8 Model Policy*. *ExcelinEd's* HQIM model policy ensures that states provide teachers and students with access to high-quality instructional materials. This policy recognizes that HQIM only works when paired with effective professional learning, evidence-based instructional practices, deep teacher content knowledge and aligned assessments. It calls on state education agencies to clearly define what counts as high-quality materials and to establish a formal review process to ensure that any adopted resources meet both quality criteria and state requirements. When implemented correctly and thoughtfully, HQIM policy is a core lever in strengthening math instruction and student outcomes.

State Examples



FLORIDA

[Florida requires school districts](#) to adopt HQIM from a state-approved list curated by experts who have engaged in an extensive and transparent review process. The law requires that approved materials align with Florida's academic standards and support evidence-based instruction. To ensure transparency, district leaders must annually report the materials they adopt to the Florida Department of Education and make this information publicly available to families and community stakeholders.



MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Department of Education's [Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter](#) initiative offers a strong model for states that do not mandate the adoption of HQIM for math. Mississippi ensures all teachers have access to high-quality instructional materials by providing districts with rubrics that assess the alignment of instructional materials to the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards. Although Mississippi does not require the adoption of HQIM for math, the initiative provides extensive resources for districts and schools to understand the importance of HQIM and support its adoption. Mississippi promotes transparency through a publicly available [HQIM heat map](#), which displays the percentage of districts with access to math HQIM, the number of students served in those districts and district-level HQIM adoption across the state. The initiative is grounded in the principle that all Mississippi teachers should have access to high-quality instructional materials to ensure every Mississippi student gets a great education.



MARYLAND

The Maryland State Department of Education has developed a [Framework for Math HQIM](#) that identifies four key criteria materials must meet to be considered high-quality:

- **Grade-Level and Standards Aligned:** Developmentally appropriate and fully aligned to Maryland State Standards.
- **Designed to Affirm Students:** Includes scaffolded supports to monitor progress and meet students where they are.
- **Instructional Design:** Features evidence-based instructional strategies for all learners.
- **Educator Supports:** Provides additional tools to deepen teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices.

These criteria serve as the foundation for evaluating and selecting instructional materials that support rigorous, accessible and personalized math instruction.



NEW MEXICO

The New Mexico Public Education Department takes a similar approach, grounded in the principle that high-quality instructional materials matter for both students and teachers. New Mexico's [NM Materials Matter](#) website serves as a transparency and accountability tool that supports informed decision making about instructional materials statewide. With the goal of ensuring every student receives a high-quality education, the initiative is grounded in research demonstrating that access to HQIM improves educational outcomes. The website explains why HQIM matter, defines what qualifies as HQIM and features a statewide dashboard showing which grades in each district have adopted HQIM.

Research

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Polikoff, M. (2018). *The Challenges of Curriculum Materials as a Reform Lever* (Evidence Speaks Report, Vol. 2, #58). Brookings Institution.

Resources and Articles

Fordham Institute: [Why teachers don't use the high-quality instructional materials they're given](#)

The Center for Education Market Dynamics: [HQIM Map](#)

ExcelinEd: [MathMatters.org](#)

EdReports: [Explore Reports for Math](#)

Annenberg EdExchange EdInstruments: [Practical Measures, Routines & Representations \(PMR²\) Task Analysis Tool | EdInstruments](#)

Annenberg EdExchange EdInstruments: [Teaching for a Robust Understanding \(TRU\) Mathematics | EdInstruments](#)

National Math Improvement Project: [HQIM Implementations](#)

New Classrooms: [Promoting Instructional Coherence Through a High-Quality Rubric for Supplemental Math Materials](#)

RAND Corporation: [How States Are Creating Conditions for Use of High-Quality Instructional Materials in K-12 Classrooms: Findings from the 2021 American Instructional Resources Survey](#)

Standards Work: [Curriculum Research: What We Know and Where We Need to Go](#)

Appendix

Model Policy: Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials for Math

High-Quality Instructional Materials for Math Act

The intent of the Legislature is to ensure student and teacher access to instructional materials that are aligned to evidence-based instructional practices and that build the four strands of mathematical proficiency as defined by this Act in grade-level knowledge and skills.

1. Definitions

- a. High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for math. Curricula, textbooks, supplemental materials, and teacher guides that are rooted in evidence-based approaches to teaching as defined by this Act and learning math, are aligned to state math content standards that build math knowledge and skills, include intervention materials, simultaneously develop the four strands of mathematical proficiency as defined in this Act, reflect evidence-based approaches to teaching math as defined by this Act that improve student outcomes and support all students in achieving grade-level math learning goals.
- b. Four strands of mathematical proficiency. A combination of real-world problem-solving skills (connecting math to students' lives), procedural fluency (the ability to perform math procedures with speed, accuracy, efficiency and flexibility), conceptual understanding (knowing how and why math "works") and productive dispositions (seeing math as sensible, useful and worthwhile).
- c. Math learning trajectories. Research-based math knowledge progressions that draw connections between the mathematical knowledge learned in previous grades, the mathematical knowledge that is to be learned in the current grade level and how the student will build on this math knowledge in the future.
- d. Evidence-based approaches to teaching math. Teaching practices that are supported by research grounded in quantitative and/or qualitative empirical evidence and are shown to positively impact student math learning outcomes.
- e. Explicit instruction. A purposeful way of instructing students using clear explanations of concepts, modeling strategies and providing immediate feedback to students.

2. High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). The Department shall establish a process for reviewing instructional materials in grades K-8 to ensure they meet the criteria for high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for math as defined by this Act. The Department shall provide a list of effective, standards-aligned math instructional materials from which districts shall select.

- a. Math instructional materials shall be evaluated on:
- b. Alignment to state standards that build both mathematical knowledge and skills;
- c. Math learning trajectories as defined by this Act that are coherent and mathematically accurate;
- d. The development of the four strands of mathematical proficiency (real-world problem-solving skills, procedural fluency, conceptual understanding and productive dispositions) as defined by this Act;
- e. Incorporation of evidence-based approaches to teaching math as defined by this Act, including but not limited to, explicit instruction as defined by this Act;
- f. The inclusion of intervention materials that support the development of grade level math knowledge; and
- g. The extent to which materials are accompanied by vendor-led professional development enhances teacher knowledge of evidence-based approaches to teaching math as defined by this Act, use of materials and math learning trajectories as defined by this Act.
- h. Districts shall publicly post an annual report detailing the HQIM adopted.

3. Effective Date. upon passage/July 1, 202X.

4. State Board Authority and Responsibilities. The State Board of Education shall have authority to enforce this act.



 [ExcelinEd.org](https://www.ExcelinEd.org)

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