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Importance of High-Quality Instructional Materials

This document summarizes the importance of high-quality instructional materials and includes a curated library of research.



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Office of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Importance of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

Access to high-quality instructional materials is critical to excellent instruction. A growing body of research points to the positive impact that high-quality instructional materials have on student learning.

- High-quality instructional materials can yield improvements in student learning outcomes equal to or greater than many interventions that are often more costly.¹
- A high-quality [instructional material] can give educators within a school and across a school system a common foundation to organize the work they're undertaking at the classroom level and collaborate to develop together...According to Brian Pick, Chief of Teaching and Learning in DCPS, Cornerstones "are about bringing equity to the district—a shared experience creating a floor, but not a ceiling, around the teaching and learning that happens in our classrooms." ²
- Research shows that students in general gain months of learning when teachers use stronger instructional materials. There is ample research to show that adopting high-quality materials is not only effective but also cost-neutral. It is no more expensive than current materials and many materials are available online for free!³
- High-quality instructional materials allow students to engage more deeply and meaningfully with the standards.

For more research on high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), please see the next page for the most recent edition of our curated HQIM Library

¹ Allan, S., & Leifer, R. (2017, August 23). How High-Quality Instructional Materials Can Drive Teacher Growth - K-12 Education. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <http://k12education.gatesfoundation.org/blog/high-quality-instructional-materials-can-drive-teacher-growth/>

² Allan, S., & Leifer, R. (2017, August 23). How High-Quality Instructional Materials Can Drive Teacher Growth - K-12 Education. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <http://k12education.gatesfoundation.org/blog/high-quality-instructional-materials-can-drive-teacher-growth/>

³ Mississippi Department of Education. (n.d.). High-Quality Instructional Materials. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.mdek12.org/HQIM>

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Library

Source Link	Topic	Summary Quote
Transforming Teaching Through Attention to Curriculum	Importance of providing teachers with HQIM and curriculum-based professional learning as a strategy to address learning gaps and accelerate learning.	"This vision of professional learning uses curriculum as both a lever and a guide, helping link teachers' actions and ideas to new standards in a concrete, focused way. Done right, it can close the gap between the experiences we provide for teachers and those we want them to provide for students. Most importantly, it gives secondary teachers what they want most from professional learning—relevance to their everyday work with their students."
How States Can Support the Adoption & Effective Use of High-Quality Standards-Aligned Instructional Materials	Impact of high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials paired with professional development anchored in the specific curriculum.	"...the choice of instructional materials has an effect on student learning — an impact that can rival that of teacher effectiveness. Coupled with professional development focused on utilizing these materials, the positive effect can prove to be even stronger."
The Hidden Value of Curriculum Reform	Curriculum reform is a low-cost, high-return educational investment.	"As education researchers Matthew Chingos and Grover (Russ) Whitehurst argued in a 2012 paper, curriculum reform is one of the best areas for productivity gains, since instructional materials can provide relatively high increases in student achievement for relatively low costs...Yet for too long, researchers, academics, and other education reformers have simply not focused on curriculum and its associated effectiveness."
What the Research Says about Quality Instructional Materials	Research compiled by Achieve	A high quality, aligned-to-standards curriculum coupled with professional support for educators can significantly improve student performance. This document highlights some critical research to support the claim.
Curriculum Research: What We Know and Where We Need to Go	Rigorous research confirms that curricular choices matter	"The overarching conclusions from the Johns Hopkins' review are that curriculum is deeply important, that a teacher's or district's choice of curriculum can substantially impact student learning, and that—as a result—the paucity of evidence upon which sound instructional, purchasing, and policy decisions can be made is a matter of deep concern and urgent need."
Leverage high-quality instructional materials	Teachers deserve both high-quality instructional materials and the learning team structures to support implementation.	"A 2012 report from the Brookings Institution compared selected interventions, including placement of math or reading Teach for America educators, placement of more effective math or reading teachers with students, or providing a better curriculum. The curriculum had a statistically better outcome over all other interventions. And something to consider is that placing a curriculum is a sustainable intervention (Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012).

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		In 2016, researchers from the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard estimated that in 4th- and 5th-grade math, switching to a top-ranked textbook would translate to student achievement gains of 3.6 percentile points — larger than the improvement of a typical teacher’s effectiveness in the first three years on the job when he or she is learning to teach (Kane, Owens, Marinell, Thal, & Staiger, 2016).”
Why are High-Quality Curricula Not Reaching More Students?	HQIM is desired by teachers and essential to student learning.	Access to quality materials is not a silver bullet, but it is a fundamental component for student learning... When teachers don’t have access to great content they hunt for it online, spending an average of seven to 12 hours a week on the task. In a survey by Scholastic, teachers cited high-quality instructional materials as a top funding priority, more important than digital resources, intervention programs, and even higher salaries.
High-Quality Curricula and Team-Based Professional Learning: A Perfect Partnership for Equity	Video Summary of report	When all students experience high-quality teaching, they are more likely to learn. When all classrooms are filled with high-quality instructional materials, students are more likely to learn. Establishing these conditions for all learners will help close achievement gaps.
Hiding in Plain Sight: Leveraging Curriculum to Improve Student Learning	This paper looks at states and districts where smart strategies are being used to ensure that high-quality standards are matched with high-quality instructional materials. It also explores the lessons from the experiences of these state and districts that other state and district leaders can apply to similar reforms in their own contexts.	“Curriculum may not be a silver bullet, but providing educators with rigorous, aligned instructional materials is a critically important, evidence-based reform that is hiding in plain sight.”
The Opportunity Myth	Report by The New Teacher’s Project (TNTP)	This report reveals 5 findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have big, clear plans; • Most students do what they are asked in school--but are still not ready to succeed after school; • Students spend most of their time in school without access to four key resources: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers who hold high expectations; • Students of color, those from low-income families, English language learners, and students with mild to moderate disabilities have even less access to these resources than their peers; and

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater access to the four resources can and does improve student achievement – "particularly" for students who start the school year behind.
What We Teach Matters: How Quality Curriculum Improves Student Outcomes	This report defines quality curriculum and sets out the contemporary evidence on its impact on student learning. It argues that developing and implementing quality curriculum is an important next step for many school systems.	"While stronger curricula make a real difference, that difference is magnified by matching it with professional development. Indeed, what research we have suggests that over half of the possible impact of shifting to a stronger curriculum is lost if strong professional development is not part of the transition."
How High-Quality Instructional Materials Can Drive Teacher Growth	A high-quality curriculum can give educators within a school and across a school system a common foundation to organize the work they're undertaking at the classroom level and collaborate to develop together.	A growing and compelling research base suggests that high-quality instructional materials can yield improvements in student learning outcomes equal to or greater than many interventions that are often more costly....According to Brian Pick, Chief of Teaching and Learning in DCPS, Cornerstones "are about bringing equity to the district—a shared experience creating a floor, but not a ceiling, around the teaching and learning that happens in our classrooms."
The Elements: Transforming Teaching through Curriculum-Based Professional Learning	Teachers deserve the highest quality professional learning to support the implementation of new instructional materials and curricula.	When we refer to high-quality instructional materials, we mean those that include specific learning goals and lessons aligned to content standards, student-centered approaches to inquiry-based learning, 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...Putting high-quality instructional materials and curriculum-based professional learning at the core can help us meet the challenges of the moment and continue to drive improvements in teaching and learning that reach all students. We can capitalize on the investments states and systems have already made in adopting new standards by better connecting teachers with curriculum developers and professional learning providers. In providing these supports, we can give teachers what they so clearly want and what research and evidence from the field indicate they — and their students — need.
Curriculum Support Guide Methodology	"What" and "How" related to the implementation of high-quality instructional materials	What leadership actions differentiated effective implementation of high-quality instructional materials? (In more technical terms - what actions taken by school and system leadership teams using high-quality instructional materials led to higher rates of improved instruction and student learning alongside higher rates of support from both teachers and leaders across the effort?)

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Commentary: Instructional Materials Supporting Teachers' Professional Learning	<p>Illustrates a range of roles for instructional materials in promoting teachers' professional learning. This article is focused on Science.</p>	<p>"Instructional materials can present a vision of what an approach looks like in practice. They can also support teachers and students in bringing that vision to life in the classroom."</p>
High-Quality Curricula: A Cost-Effective Way to Increase Student Learning	<p>Educational policy research report on the importance of high-quality curriculum.</p>	<p>"...curriculum does matter: some curricula produce better learning outcomes than others. Furthermore, switching to a more effective curriculum seems to be a cost-effective way to improve student outcomes."</p>