Curriculum-Based Professional Learning in Literacy and English Language Arts

Guidance for Professional Learning within Ohio's Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

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Department of Education & Workforce

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Introduction

This guide is intended to support effective implementation of effective literacy and English language arts instruction in Ohio districts and schools, through the use of high-quality professional learning and aligned curriculum-based professional learning. This guide provides:

- An understanding of curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) and its role in supporting the implementation of high-quality instructional materials and effective instruction.
- The multiple stages of curriculum-based professional learning, as well as key tools and resources to support effective planning and implementation.

This guide was developed as part of Ohio's 2024 Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant to support prospective applicants in developing curriculum-based professional learning plans.

Why Curriculum-Based Professional Learning?

Ohio is committed to supporting district leaders and teams in selecting, preparing for and supporting the use of high-quality instructional materials in literacy and English language arts.

Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement and Ohio Materials Matter encourages the use of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), which enhance student learning by offering standards-aligned content, a clear scope and sequence for vertical alignment, and evidence-based strategies for data-driven instruction. Materials aligned with the science of reading are especially effective in promoting positive outcomes like improved student progress and achievement. However, simply having access to HQIM is not enough; educators must also learn to implement them effectively. This requires a deep understanding of the content, the ability to analyze and use data to inform instruction, and a commitment to implementing the materials with integrity.

By linking professional learning to educators' immediate needs, curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) deepens content knowledge and builds practical skills for implementation. Through the provision of ongoing supports, educators are empowered to understand and successfully implement HQIM to advance student learning. Additionally, this type of professional learning can help educators at the various levels of implementation. Curriculum-based professional learning should take into consideration the stage of implementation the school or district is in, as well as the reservations, concerns, and needs of the educators that are a part of this process.

Framework for Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

What is Curriculum-Based Professional Learning?

Curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) is a form of high-quality professional learning that specifically supports and strengthens instruction through the use of high-quality instructional materials. Curriculum-based professional learning is a powerful lever for establishing a common vision for instruction, promoting effective implementation of HQIM, building expertise in literacy instruction, and enhancing the effectiveness of instruction for all students.

Characteristics of High-Quality Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

Professional learning is most effective when it is ongoing, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and focused on classroom application (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015). Educators are more likely to adopt new methods when they see clear connections between professional development and their classroom needs.
High-quality professional learning should:

- Align with school, district, and state priorities.
- Focus on critical content, high-quality instructional materials, and evidence-based practices.
- Include examples and modeling.
- Include opportunities for active learning and applications of new strategies.
- Include opportunities for collaboration.
- Involve follow-up and feedback.

Engaging educators in curriculum-based professional learning that emphasizes HQIM and evidence-based practices is an effective way to enhance their content knowledge and provide practical skills they can use immediately (Short & Hirsch, 2023). This approach equips educators with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement the curriculum effectively, while offering continuous support for successful implementation. Ongoing support also strengthens educators' understanding of the science of reading, promotes a shared understanding of best practices, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement that can lead to better student outcomes.

Curriculum-based professional learning that is of high-quality includes the following characteristics:

- **Content-focused and curriculum-based:** Deepens educators' understanding of what to teach and how to teach it within the context of educators' HQIM.
- **Specific to educators' context and needs:** Customized to educators' roles, subject areas, grade levels/bands, and skill levels.
- **Equity-focused:** Supports educator practices to ensure all students, regardless of their background or context, have the opportunity to engage in rigorous, grade-level tasks. It maintains high expectations, addresses disparities, and promotes inclusivity.
- **Data-driven:** Supports educators in collecting, analyzing, and using data from various sources, including HQIM-embedded student work and assessments, to determine how to meet students' learning needs or support educators with their implementation of the HQIM.
- **Responsive to beliefs and mindsets:** Attends to educator motivation, mindset, and implicit bias; involves courageous conversations that challenge negative assumptions about what students are capable of.
- **Interactive and collaborative:** Provides opportunities for educators to see models, practice skills, review data, engage with tasks from the HQIM, and collaborate with peers.
- **Vision-aligned:** Supports educators by connecting the HQIM and goals for educators and students to a vision for excellent, equitable instruction.

(Framework for Curriculum-Based Professional Learning, Rivet Education, 2024)

Structures of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

Curriculum-based professional learning can occur through a variety of structures and should align to support a cohesive professional learning plan consistent with a local literacy improvement plan. Depending on the purpose, content, or audience, high-quality curriculum-based professional learning may utilize various professional learning models, such as workshops, community of practices, coaching, peer observation, collaborative teaming, and consultation. The structure of professional learning should align with key stages of HQIM implementation (Appendix A).

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODELS

Type	Description	Occurrence	Frequency
Workshop	Group learning on targeted topic in the materials to support initial or deeper understanding of resources, materials, or strategies and how to implement them into instruction.	After school, professional development days within the school year, and/or summer	Ongoing throughout the year
Collaborative Teaming/ Professional Learning Community	Grade-level or content teams engage in unit internalization, studying lessons, tasks, texts, and student work from their HQIM. Teams use protocols for collaborative planning, observation, and feedback.	Scheduled collaboration periods within the school day	Weekly
Coaching	Educators engage in collaborative discussion with an expert in literacy curriculum and instruction about individual or group instructional needs based on observation or data set.	Observations during school day; feedback and discussion before, during, or after school	Ongoing throughout the year
Consultation	Discussion with experts in HQIM, professional learning, state, or regional provider to support professional learning systems and ongoing support.	Before, during, or after school	Ongoing throughout the year
Peer Observation	Peers observe others. Feedback and discussion following observation to support professional growth and implementation. Observations focus on a specific concept or skill and include actionable next steps.	Observations during the school day; feedback and discussion before, during, or after school	Ongoing throughout the year
Community of Practice	Educator groups with a common instructional concern, learning, or interest in a topic meet for resource sharing collaborative problem solving, and goal setting around implementation.	Before, during, or after school	Monthly

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Supporting Implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials through Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

The National Implementation Research Network (Fixsen et al., 2005) outlines several stages of implementation that can effectively support the implementation of HQIM and evidence-based language and literacy practices (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Stages of Implementation (Adapted from Fixsen et al., 2005, 2009)
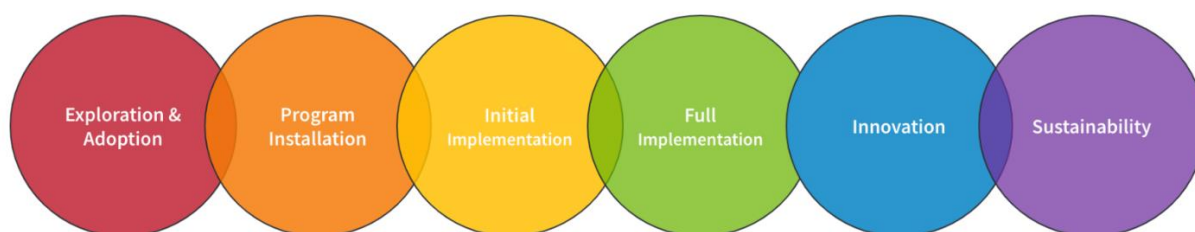
Implementation of HQIM is a multi-year process. Educators need ongoing training and support to navigate the complexities of implementing HQIM across various stages of change. Curriculum-based professional learning is a structured approach to supporting educators as they progress through the stages of implementation.

Educator needs and concerns during curriculum implementation often follow a predictable trajectory (Hall & Hord, 1987). Initially, educators may feel overwhelmed by the need to understand new materials and methodologies, raising concerns about time, training, and clarity. As implementation progresses, apprehensions often shift to practical challenges, such as aligning the curriculum with student needs and managing classroom dynamics. In later stages, educators may seek opportunities for fine-tuning and continuous improvement. Schools can proactively address these concerns by offering targeted professional development, creating collaborative spaces for peer support, and providing clear communication and resources tailored to each stage. By anticipating these patterns and providing proactive supports, schools can support a smoother transition, reduce frustration, and empower educators to effectively implement the curriculum.

Stages of Implementation and Professional Learning Supports

EXPLORATION

During exploration, educators and leaders learn about a program's design and purpose to determine its fit and feasibility. Presentations and professional learning sessions provide

foundational information to proactively address early concerns about relevance and feasibility.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
Supporting educators to: • Understand the purpose, potential, and feasibility of materials	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Workshops • Collaborative conversations in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)/Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs) • Access to peer and instructional coaches to support the evaluation and selection of materials • Vendor support (for example, presentations)

INSTALLATION

Installation focuses on preparing educators for curriculum adoption. Professional learning provides immersive experiences where educators engage with the curriculum as students, helping them understand lesson flow and instructional strategies. Training sessions guide educators in setting up classroom routines, materials, and support systems. These activities proactively address concerns about readiness and logistics.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
Supporting educators to: • Navigate instructional shifts. • Express concerns and address them collaboratively.	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Initial trainings to familiarize educators with the new materials • Intensive, immersive trainings focused on experiencing lessons as students to anticipate challenges, reflect, and plan for instruction • Ongoing training, coaching, and collaborative teaming (for example, collaborative planning, reflection, and peer coaching within TBTs/PLCs) • Regular data-analysis of student and adult implementation data • Vendor support (for example, follow-up training sessions)

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INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

As educators begin using the curriculum, professional learning emphasizes practical application. Educators participate in classroom observations, share reflections, and analyze student work to identify challenges and refine their practices. Continuous coaching and peer support address concerns about instructional effectiveness and student outcomes.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
Support educators to: • Teach with integrity. • Differentiate instruction. • Use appropriate pacing.	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Ongoing training and coaching that focuses on learning how to effectively use the materials, or unit internalization • Peer observations (for example, classroom visits; learning walks) • Video reflections with action steps • Collaborative conversations in TBTs/PLCs • Bi-directional feedback loops • Vendor support (for example, follow-up training sessions; technical assistance; on-site visits)

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

At this stage, professional learning supports consistent and widespread use of the curriculum across classrooms. Collaborative practices like lesson studies, teacher-led workshops, and shared reflections help educators refine their use of the curriculum. These supports address concerns about scaling effective practices and achieving consistent student outcomes.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
Support educators to: • Address challenges and remain committed to the new practices and materials. • Maintain consistency across classrooms, ensuring the integrity of implementation.	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Continued training and coaching that focuses on improving the integrity of implementation • Peer observations (for example, classroom visits; learning walks) • Video reflections with action steps • Collaborative conversations in TBTs/PLCs • Bi-directional feedback loops

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
	• Vendor support (for example, follow-up training sessions; technical assistance; on-site visits) • Reflection and revisions to the plan • Annual reset (e.g., considering staffing transitions)

INNOVATION

As educators become confident with the curriculum, professional learning shifts to fostering innovation. Educators explore ways to adapt lessons, integrate new technologies, and respond to diverse student needs while maintaining alignment with curriculum goals. This requires a deep understanding of the materials, confidence to modify or expand upon them, and a network to share and learn from innovations. Educators may share successful adaptations and co-develop strategies, addressing advanced concerns about enhancing and personalizing instruction. A protocol is used to test, refine, approve, and share innovations.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
Support educators to: • Deeply understand materials • Use data to inform innovations (e.g., scaffolds, intensifications, extensions) • Ensure consistency across classrooms	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Continued training and coaching that focuses on refining implementation through the use of innovations (for example, scaffolds, intensifications, extensions) • Peer observations (for example, classroom visits; learning walks) • Video reflections with action steps • Collaborative conversations in TBTs/PLCs focused on testing and refining innovations • Bi-directional feedback loops (for example, a process for submitting and approving tested and refined innovations) • Vendor support (for example, follow-up training sessions; technical assistance; on-site visits)

SUSTAINABILITY

Supports include refresher training for experienced educators, onboarding for new staff, and leadership development to maintain momentum. Continuous improvement is driven by data analysis, feedback loops, and collaborative planning. These efforts address concerns about institutionalizing success and maintaining instructional relevance over time.

Potential Needs	Proactive Supports
The system should: • Foster staff retention. • Adequately train new staff. • Offer refresher trainings. • Adapt to changes in student demographics or evolving learning needs. • Support continuous improvement.	Proactive support provided during this stage might include but is not limited to: • Continued training and coaching • Initial training, mentoring, and coaching for new educators • Peer observations (for example, classroom visits; learning walks) • Collaborative conversations in TBTs/PLCs • Bi-directional feedback loops

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Stages of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

Curriculum-based professional learning utilizes intentional learning models at specific stages of curriculum implementation from early use to expert refinement. Each stage addresses distinct or school needs and priorities, fostering effective and sustained instructional practices.

Installation and Initial Implementation	Ongoing Implementation	Sustained Implementation
Overview: • Early use phase, or materials launch, uses an immersion model to prepare for implementing initial lessons and units. • Educators experience lessons, engage in reflective discussions, and plan classroom use. • Classroom observations, instructional videos, and feedback from early adopters help anticipate student needs. • May recur throughout the year for new units and involve collaboration with experts in curriculum and professional learning.	**Overview:** • Educators utilize materials within their classrooms. • Professional learning shifts to support practical application, addressing challenges that arise and refining instructional strategies. • Educators share insights, observe peers, and analyze student outcomes to enhance their effectiveness.	**Overview:** • Once the curriculum is established, efforts shift to maintaining its impact over time. • Involves ongoing professional learning to adapt to changing needs, reinforce effective practices, and ensure the curriculum remains relevant and engaging for both educators and students.
Professional Learning: • Immersion in lessons as learners • Classroom observations • Videos of classroom instruction • Planning and rehearsals	**Professional Learning:** • PLCs or TBTs • Examining student work • Classroom visits • Learning walks • Reflective Practice • Mentoring • Coaching	**Professional Learning:** • PLCs or TBTs • Study groups • Leadership development • Professional networks • Analysis of assessment data

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Roles and Responsibilities within Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

	System and School Leaders	CBPL Providers and Coaches	Educators
High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)	Ensure access to high-quality instructional materials and professional learning to support implementation.	Deepen expertise and anchor professional learning in district curriculum and instructional materials.	Build expertise in the subject area, the curriculum for teaching it, and the instructional materials used with students.
Training	Develop CBPL providers and coaches through learning experiences that resemble those they will use with educators.	Introduce materials using activities that mirror student experiences.	Experience lessons from a student's point of view.
Evaluation and Feedback Cycles	Establish evaluation and feedback cycles to assess the progress and impact of investments in CBPL. Audit and prioritize resources, including time for CBPL.	Provide feedback and support implementation through coaching and collaborative teaming. Demonstrate how to scaffold materials and teach in culturally responsive ways.	Seek feedback and support from coaches and collaborative learning teams. Commit to meaningful participation.
Systems	Create a change management plan, establish calendars and pacing guides that document the support, materials, and time to be allocated to curriculum implementation. Leverage internal and external expertise to support learning across the stages of implementation.	Support the development of change management plans that recognize and allocate the essential time needed for curriculum implementation.	Seek internal and external expertise and support to advance individual and group learning.

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	System and School Leaders	CBPL Providers and Coaches	Educators
Shared Vision	Develop and promote a shared vision for teaching and learning.	Help leaders, educators, and coaches articulate and amplify a shared vision for teaching and learning.	Be able to explain curricular coherence that transcends grade levels or courses.

(Adapted from Short & Hirsh, 2022)

Selecting and Managing Professional Learning Partners

When evaluating and selecting potential professional learning partners to support the implementation high-quality instructional materials through curriculum-based professional learning, consider the following:

1. **Determine the stage of implementation that professional learning is needed to support.** Consider the current level of access to high-quality instructional materials in your setting and determine if support is needed in adopting HQIM, launching an HQIM that is newly adopted or in implementing adopted HQIM. Utilize a tool such as the Instructional Materials Implementation Tool to identify which phase of implementation you are currently in and determine readiness.
2. **Determine professional learning needs.** Utilize a tool such as the Literacy Professional Learning Planning and Evaluation Inventory to audit schoolwide literacy professional learning and the Rivet Education Professional Learning Diagnostic to determine goals and needs for curriculum-based professional learning specifically.
3. **Investigate potential partners.** Refine your search further by researching and evaluating potential professional learning partners, including reviewing the Rivet Education's Professional Learning Partner Guide for potential fits or evaluating other potential partners for the quality of services offered. If investigating potential professional learning partners, consider evaluating services offered against the characteristics of curriculum-based professional learning described on pages 3-4 as well as asking key questions related to high-quality CBPL, such as those provided in Appendix A.
4. **Select partner and begin professional learning.** Once a professional learning partner that meets local needs has been identified, begin to plan for the partnership, including how this partner will support and align with the district or school's overall vision for HQIM implementation, current practices and ongoing professional learning. In addition, consider what services and materials to be provided by the partner are a local priority and how services will be monitored.

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Planning for Implementation through the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

Implementing CBPL is a key pillar of Ohio's Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant. Prospective grantees should consider the following when developing curriculum-based professional learning plans and a scope and sequence for implementation throughout the grant.

- **Consider the phase of implementation where CBPL is needed.** For the purposes of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, districts and schools must engage in curriculum-based professional learning focused on the ***implementation of HQIM***, rather than selection or adoption of HQIM. When reviewing the Rivet Professional Learning Guide, investigate partners that provide support in <u>initial implementation</u> and/or <u>ongoing implementation</u> of HQIM. If considering partnering with a different provider, consider how other potential partners would provide support in these phases as well.
- **Consider the timeline for district or schoolwide adoption of materials and determine readiness for engagement in curriculum-based professional learning.** If materials have not yet been selected or adopted, consider beginning a professional learning plan and sequence in year 2 of the grant, after this phase is completed.
- **Identify key personnel who will support implementation of CBPL, including literacy or instructional coaches, administrators and teacher leaders.** In addition, consider how existing teams and structures will be leveraged and how all educators will be supported through the CBPL.
- **Consider how subgrant funds will be most effectively leveraged to support CBPL.** Subgrant funds may be used to contract with a professional learning vendor to provide training and coaching services and supplies specific to CBPL and to provide stipends for educators if meetings or trainings take place during off-contract hours. Literacy coaches funded by the grant may support CBPL as part of their job duties. In addition, funds may be used to contract with a regional support provider to participate in and support CPBL activities to support sustainability.

Note: Subgrant funds may be used for professional learning related to HQIM. Subgrant funds may not be used to purchase high-quality instructional materials for use as core curriculum and instructional materials or evidence-based reading intervention programs.

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Additional Resources and References

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Appendix A: Sample Structures of Professional Learning in HQIM Timeline

Phase	Type of Professional Learning	Rationale
Exploration	Consultation Collaborative teaming	Fosters awareness, knowledge, and readiness for HQIM and CBPL implementation through vendor presentations and collaborative teaming.
Installation	Consultation Workshops Collaborative teaming	Establishes infrastructure to support HQIM implementation through vendor trainings, model lessons, immersive workshops, and collaborative teaming.
Initial Implementation	Consultation Workshops Coaching Collaborative teaming	Supports schools and school systems in developing and executing a process to select professional learning aligned to HQIM through vendor consultation and coaching, lesson rehearsals, collaborative teaming, and school-based literacy coaching.
Full Implementation	Consultation Workshops Coaching Collaborative teaming Peer observation	Supports teachers and school leaders with an initial understanding of the HQIM and prepares them to implement key components of the lessons through vendor consultation, ongoing workshops, school-based literacy coaching, collaborative teaming, and peer observation.
Innovation	Consultation Workshops Coaching Collaborative teaming Peer observation Community of practice	Deepen initial understanding of how to implement the HQIM by providing opportunities for teachers to review data, reflect on implementation, and plan for instruction through consultation, ongoing workshops, school-based literacy coaching, peer observation, and communities of practice.
Sustainability	Consultation Workshops Coaching Collaborative teaming	Supports school leaders in identifying and implementing ongoing professional learning and resources required to continue successful implementation of the HQIM using ongoing consultation, workshops, coaching, and teaming.

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Appendix B: Sample Questions for Prospective Professional Learning Partners

1. How has the organization or provider supported similar schools or districts in the past and what was the impact?
2. How will the professional learning support shifts in mindsets and beliefs to ensure students have access to and engage in grade-level content?
3. How will the professional learning engage educators as learners through inquiry and sense-making while using the student instructional materials or programs?
4. How will the professional learning incorporate feedback and reflection to support educators in thinking about materials or programs, receive input on how best to use them, examine student work and assessment data, and making adjustments to instructional practice?
5. How will the professional learning apply change management strategies and practices, including addressing concerns and challenges in implementation and explicit opportunities for discussion and problem-solving?
6. What models of professional learning are available and what will the frequency of engagement look like?
7. How will the professional learning provide varied learning experiences, such as coaching, expert support, professional learning communities (PLCs), institutes, workshops, and learning walks?

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