# VIRGINIA LITERACY ACT

## Implementation Playbook


March 2024

# Letter from State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The Department is excited to work alongside school divisions as they work diligently to implement the Virginia Literacy Act over the next six months. As all school divisions are working to create a future forward vision for what literacy instruction looks like in every classroom, the Department has created a playbook to act as a framework for decision making and to help provide a roadmap for a successful 2024-2025 school year.

This playbook has been designed for *all* Virginia school divisions—no matter where you are in the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act. As district leaders are actively engaged in developing a literacy vision, selecting ELA materials and determining what structures and supports will help schools with the full-scale implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act, the Department has scheduled a series of in person networks to provide space for school divisions to collaborate within their school division and across school divisions. In addition, this playbook will help school division leadership teams when they return to their school divisions and map out their implementation plan.

First and foremost, this playbook is grounded in the department's vision that every child in Virginia is reading and comprehending on grade level by the end of third grade. Additionally, this playbook is designed to help ensure that this vision is accelerated through the adoption, purchase and implementation of high-quality instructional materials (also known as curricula). Almost every school division in the Commonwealth has hired reading specialists, ensured they have been trained, and have a plan to train their teachers. Now, we must combine training with strong materials to ensure that teachers can focus on the development of reading, comprehension and writing skills of their students.

The playbook is also designed to meet every school division where they are. Some school divisions have already begun the adoption process and others have not, and this playbook is designed to be tailored to their phase of implementation.

Throughout the playbook, divisions will find resources, examples, and case studies to aid them in their HQIM adoption & implementation. Divisions can use these resources, recommendations, and strategies to complete their required Division Literacy Plans outlining their plans for HQIM implementation in 2024-25.

The department looks forward to supporting each school division with collaborative learning sessions, playbook resources, networking opportunities, ongoing professional learning, and personalized support in your region and individual school division.

In appreciation,

Lisa Coons, Ed. D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Virginia Department of Education

# Table of Contents

# **Part 1:** Why High-Quality Instructional Materials?

## **Chapter 1:** Overview

Every student in a Virginia classroom deserves access to exceptional literacy instruction, which includes challenging content and the opportunity to read, write, listen, and discuss their ideas about rich texts. For too long, access to this type of deep learning has varied from classroom to classroom and from school to school across the Commonwealth. A student's opportunity for this type of learning should not depend on the luck of the draw, on which teacher the student gets, or their particular school. In Virginia, we want to ensure that every learner engages in grade-level instruction that prepares them for college or career. This instruction begins in our Kindergarten classrooms with access to systematic, explicit phonics instruction and knowledge-building texts, and continues through the upper grades as students need to build on their learning and skills to be able to decode, comprehend, process, and analyze complex texts. High-quality instructional materials are the cornerstone to ensure consistent and rigorous literacy instruction.

**We now aim to provide this learning experience to all students in our Commonwealth through High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) that will ensure every school and classroom system-wide provides the same opportunities for all students to engage with rich, challenging content.**

The Virginia Literacy Act requires that all Virginia school systems must adopt HQIM for all k-5 classrooms no later than the 2024-25 school year. This shift requires all school leaders to assess current practices and ensure that the high-quality materials are selected, adopted, purchased and used. To this point, educators in VA have been accustomed to utilizing a blend of adopted school materials, their own homemade instructional resources, and lesson content from online sources like Pinterest or Teachers Pay Teachers. Moving forward, all schools and educators are being asked to *exclusively* use the HQIM adopted by their division. This means daily lessons must be grounded in adopted materials, and leaders should be able to walk through classrooms and see every teacher using the materials purchased. In literacy in particular, students need access to a curriculum that builds on a systematic sequence in foundational skills and builds coherently grade-to-grade on knowledge-building topics. There is a compelling body of evidence that shows that HQIM not only provides this coherent sequence but leads to better outcomes for students.

It is important to note that compelling evidence shows that HQIM alone will not move the needle on evidence-based literacy instruction and improved student learning. Without the proper investment, understanding, professional support & learning, and accountability, educators are unlikely to have any more success with new instructional materials than they had with previous curriculum. For these reasons, divisions and schools will have to change how they have historically supported teachers, leaders, and other stakeholders to implement their instructional resources. No longer can we provide teachers and leaders with curriculum-agnostic development or coaching and feedback misaligned to

what the research tells us about how students learn to read. Development should be curriculum-specific as often as possible and must adhere to the principles of science-based reading instruction.

In short, as division leaders, you must all lead a change management process to transform the student experience in your classrooms. This process will involve deep learning for yourselves and every educator you support. Implementing HQIM is about more than understanding the teacher's guide—educators must understand the purpose and goals behind their materials and each lesson activity within them. This playbook provides a roadmap for leaders to both understand the research and evidence-base behind these shifts and practical tools for implementing these changes.

**Note:** Throughout this document, we use the term "HQIM" as shorthand for High-Quality Instructional Materials. HQIM can be thought of as curriculum, or all of the instructional content that is used to teach students. A key shift, however, in how educators have typically thought about curriculum is that HQIM requires intentional adherence to both its overarching scope & sequence and individual lesson content. This is because the HQIM that have been approved for adoption by the Virginia Board of Education have been carefully designed based on science-based reading research and coherently built so that instructional content builds upon earlier foundations set both within and across grades. This is a significant shift for educators. This playbook is designed to explain the "why" behind this shift and provide divisions with the strategies & resources that they will need to employ to support their teachers and leaders to be able to make this shift most effectively.

## The Research Behind HQIM

Virginia's children are in the midst of a nationwide literacy crisis. While this crisis is not new and has been present for decades, educators know better and now must do better. Across the Commonwealth, one in three K-2 students are reading below benchmark, and far too many third graders are failing their Reading Standards of Learning assessment. This impacts students for years to come, as those who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than those who are.

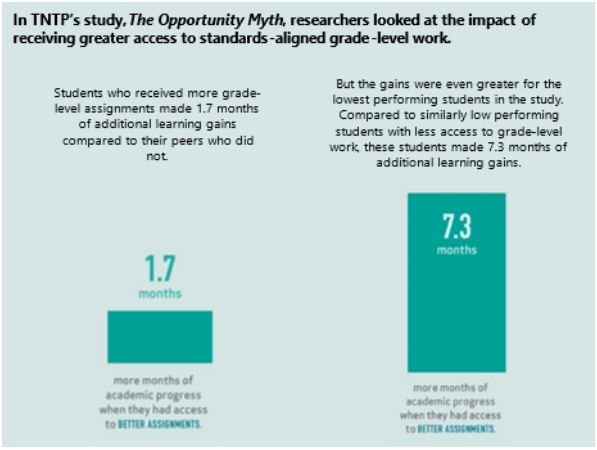
A growing body of academic research, however, shows evidence that putting stronger curriculum in the hands of teachers can halt these concerning trends and lead to increased learning for students. Johns Hopkins Best Evidence Encyclopedia, for example, suggests that improving curricula has the same impact as adding between 25 and 50 additional instructional days to the school year. And the Brookings Institute showed that having a strong curriculum makes more impact on student learning than upgrading from an average teacher to one in the very top quartile. Imagine the impact if every student in the Commonwealth had access to such instruction.

### HQIM are among the most cost-effective interventions available

- The Brookings Institution found, "the effect sizes for curriculum are larger, more certain, and less expensive" than the effects of preschool, charter schools, and merit pay for teachers.
- The Center for American Progress found that, "The average cost-effectiveness ratio of switching curriculum was almost 40 times that of class-size reduction."

While not every student can have access to only top quartile teachers, every student in Virginia *can* have access to high-quality instructional materials. In fact, thanks to the Virginia Literacy Act, every student in the Commonwealth *will* have access to the highest quality literacy materials available starting in 2024. This has the transformational potential to dramatically improve outcomes for kids and ensure that students in Virginia lead the nation when it comes to literacy proficiency.

Such dramatic transformation is not an exaggeration. In a 2018 study that looked at the impact for students who received greater access to more rigorous instructional content, TNTP found that students who consistently received stronger assignments—like those included in the best HQIM—made 1.7 months of additional learning gains compared to their peers who did not. The impact was even stronger for the lowest performing students in the study, who made *7.3 months* of additional learning gains compared to similarly low performing peers with less access to strong curricular content. Imagine if the lowest performing students in VA were able to make 7.3 months of additional learning gains every year—year after year—simply by receiving consistent access to stronger assignments. Those gaps in third grade reading proficiency would disappear. The number of students dropping out of high school would be cut significantly. By consistently using HQIM, this can become Virginia's reality.





This research showing the dramatic impact on student learning is the driving reason why all divisions, schools, and teachers across Virginia are being asked to adopt & exclusively use new high-quality instructional materials in K-5 literacy. The evidence is simply too overwhelming to ignore. By leaning into HQIM, Virginia will make good on its promise to ensure that every third grader in the state can read proficiently and is on a trajectory to succeed in achieving their goals after graduating high school.

## Resources:

The following are key studies on the importance of high-quality curriculum:

- Hiding in Plain Sight: Leveraging Curriculum to Improve Student Outcomes, by Chiefs for Change
- The Hidden Value of Curriculum Reform, by The Center for American Progress
- What We Teach Matters: How Quality Curriculum Improves Student Outcomes, by David Steiner et al.
- The Opportunity Myth by TNTP, Inc.

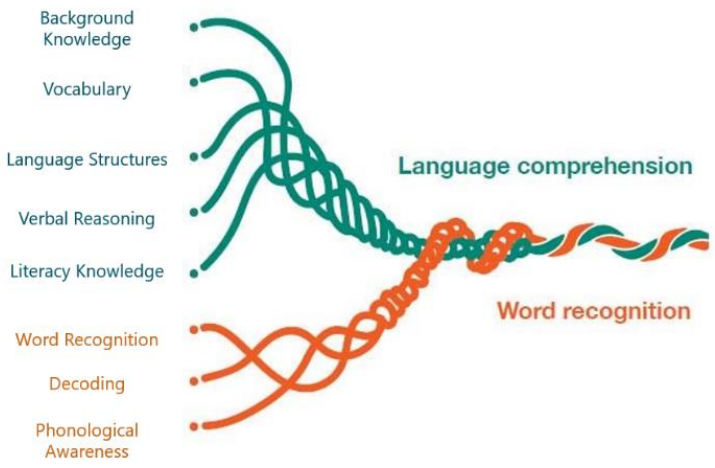
## **Chapter 2:** The Importance of HQIM in Literacy—Incorporating Science-Based Reading Research

The importance of HQIM in literacy becomes apparent when thinking about the science behind how children learn to read. The science-based reading research is comprised of decades of scientific research about how students become proficient readers. The research can be loosely summarized by a formula known as the Simple View of Reading:


The Simple View of Reading means that to become skilled readers:

- Students must be able to decode (**D**) the words on the page by understanding the sounds that letters make and blending those sounds together to make words
- Students must also have the necessary language comprehension (**LC**) skills, such as vocabulary, background knowledge, and understanding of language structures to comprehend what they decode.
- Once students can do both these things—decode and comprehend—with sufficient fluency, they will become proficient readers with ample reading comprehension ability (**RC**).

Another way of capturing this idea is through Scarborough's Rope (pictured below). The rope depicts the multiple skills within word recognition and language comprehension that are critical for skilled reading.




The best literacy curricula will take this research into account to include high-quality instructional content on both word recognition *and* language comprehension. Both sets of competencies will require significant attention in the early grades, while later grades will focus more on language comprehension.

## Decoding Instruction

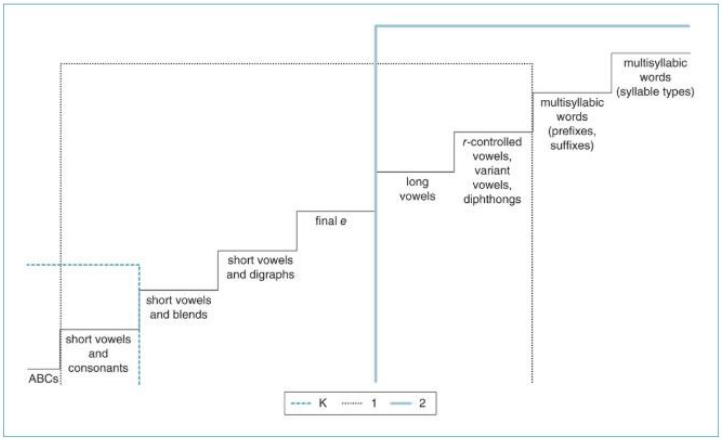

Decoding or Word Recognition instruction is often referred to as foundational skills instruction because it teaches the foundational skills of reading such as phonics and phonological awareness (i.e. the building blocks of words). Foundational skills curricula should follow three **key principles for effective foundational skills instruction**:

| | |
|---|---|
| SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION | Instruction should cover a systematic scope & sequence that teaches the most common sounds and spellings before less common ones. |
| EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION | The many sounds, spellings, patterns & rules of English should be made clear and explicit to students so that they can decode words and not simply guess them. |
| STUDENT PRACTICE | To develop automaticity, students should receive frequent practice with newly acquired skills. With sufficient practice, students will be able to devote more brain power to fluent reading for comprehension and less to sounding out or guessing unfamiliar words. |

### Systematic Instruction

There are 26 letters in the English language, 44 phonemes (individual units of sound), and multiple spelling patterns for each of these phonemes. From Kindergarten to second grade, students need access to HQIM that explicitly teaches each of these phonemes and their spelling patterns in a systematic, coherent scope and sequence. For example, there are multiple spellings of the /s/ sound—*s, ss, ce, se, st, c, sc.* Students should learn each of these spelling patterns individually and in a sequence that moves from more common to less common patterns. A first grade-teacher who is teaching the 'c' spelling of the /s/ sound should be able to build on previous year's skill, knowing that students already learned the 's' and 'ss' spelling patterns. This can only happen when all classrooms are using HQIM with a systematic scope and sequence for all spelling patterns in the English language.

A systematic approach to foundational skills is critical because students should learn the sounds and spelling patterns of English following a logical sequence in which more complex sound-spelling patterns build upon more foundational ones. For instance, we wouldn't teach students the "sc" spelling for the /s/ sound (as in "scent") before they've learned the basic "s" spelling (as in "sun"). And we wouldn't teach students the "silent e rule" and the word "cane" before they have mastered basic decoding and can sound out simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words like "can." If educators taught the more complex sounds and spelling patterns before students had mastered the more foundational ones, students would likely be highly confused and struggle to use their newly taught skills in reading and writing. Teaching skills in the proper sequence is essential because of the cumulative nature of foundational skills in which later learning builds on earlier learning.




The best foundational skills HQIM will reflect this systematic, cumulative approach and ensure that sounds, spellings and concepts are taught and mastered in a logical, systematic order. By presenting such a logical progression of learning, HQIM removes the burden from educators having to develop their own scope & sequence, freeing up teachers to focus on instruction and their students' specific learning needs. The diagram presented here shows a common and logical K-2 progression of foundational skills found in many HQIM.

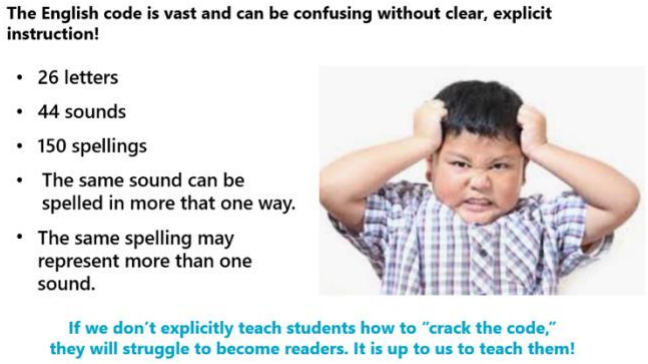
Systematic instruction also often implies a "sounds first" approach, meaning that sounds are taught before or alongside letters. This is because we want students to think about the sounds letters make (e.g. the letter "s" makes the /s/ sound like ssssss) so that when they see a word, they sound it out rather than simply state each letter name. For instance, when reading, we want students to see the word "cat" and think /k/ /a/ /t/ and not just "c" "a" "t". Early literacy HQIM ensure that students learn letter sounds alongside—or even before—letter names, as recognizing letter sounds is a critical prerequisite for decoding and word recognition. In addition, the English Language Arts Standards has incorporated this systematic, sounds first approach to ensure that the standards, materials, and research align.

### Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction means making the many sounds and spelling patterns of English extremely clear to students through direct instruction, explanation, modeling, practice, and feedback. An explicit approach to foundational skills instruction is critical because of the sheer complexity of the English language. Though there are 26 letters in the English language, there are 44 different sounds and 150 different spellings for those sounds. The same sound can be spelled in more than one way (e.g. the /s/ sound can

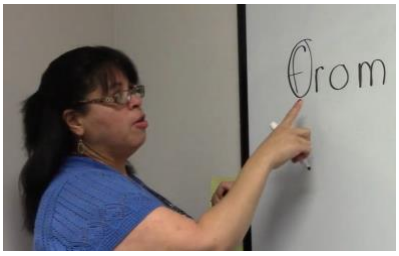
be spelled “s”, “ss”, “c”, “ce”, “se”, “sc”, “st”, “ps”, “ts”, and “z”!) and the same spelling may represent more than one sound (“c” can make both the /k/ sound as well as the /s/ sound).

We must explicitly teach students the sound-spelling patterns of the English language and carefully draw their attention to the many patterns and subtleties of the language. For instance, “can” is straightforwardly pronounced /k/ /a/ /n/. But if we add an “e” to the end of the word, it becomes /k/ /ae/ /n/ → “cane”. Instruction must make such patterns clear to students so that they understand why and when these subtle changes in English spelling and pronunciation occur. Early literacy HQIM will include high-quality explanations, modeling and practice that make the many sound-patterns of English clear and explicit for students.




### What does explicit instruction look like?

Watch in this video how clearly the teacher models and explains what makes the word “from” a tricky word by explicitly explaining which parts of the word follow normal sound-spelling patterns and which do not. Contrast that explicit approach with this video in which “from” is taught as a simple sight word that students must memorize without any clear explanation or instruction why.



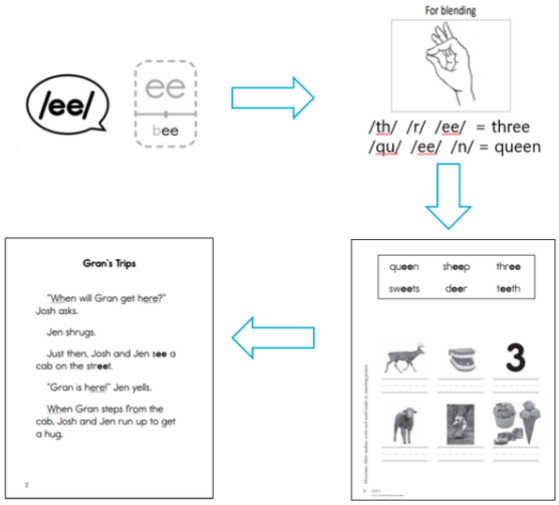

## Student Practice

Significant student practice is critical for students to develop and hone newly acquired skills. This is because learning new sound-spelling patterns is not automatic. It takes significant practice to develop automaticity and fluency. We want students to become so automatic with their newly taught skills that they spend less time & brain power trying to sound out or guess words and more time reading for fluency and comprehension.

Therefore, students need frequent, supported practice:

- Frequent because it may take many at-bats for students to master these skills (and mastery is key due to the systematic nature of foundational skills in which later skills are layered upon earlier ones)
- Supported because teachers must provide in-the-moment feedback and scaffolds to address any misconceptions and support students to develop mastery.

The graphic to the right illustrates a strong progression of student practice within a lesson. Here, students are first introduced to the sound /ee/ spelled “ee.” After hearing this sound in isolation multiple times, students might begin blending or segmenting to practice hearing and speaking this new phoneme (or sound) in common words.




Once students show they can identify this new phoneme in spoken language, the teacher might introduce the spelling for that sound in simple text with a workbook assignment asking students to match pictures to words with the new sound-spelling pattern. Thus, students begin to make the sound-spelling connection. And finally, students get to practice using their new grasp of this sound-spelling pattern to make sense of text via a decodable reader featuring the new pattern.

Students will need to continue to see, hear, and practice that new sound-spelling pattern many times before it becomes automatic. For some students, automaticity may come relatively quickly. For others, it may take numerous attempts. The dosage of instruction and practice for each student may need to look different. But it is critical that we give students all the at-bats they need to develop mastery over their newly taught skills.

HQIM build these practice opportunities into instruction to ensure that students get the at-bats they need to develop mastery. Further, HQIM spirals foundational skills so that students receiving both frequent and ongoing opportunities to see, hear, and practice sound-spelling patterns develop the automaticity necessary for reading fluency.

### The importance of monitoring & feedback in skills practice and mastery

During skills practice, teachers should carefully monitor students to provide appropriate feedback and address any misconceptions in the moment. This is particularly critical due to the systematic and cumulative nature of skills instruction in which students must master earlier skills before learning new ones that build upon prior skills. If a student does not master skills in the order following the general scope & sequence of their HQIM, they are likely to struggle even further as they get deeper into the curriculum.

## Language Comprehension Instruction


HQIM is not only an essential part of foundational skills instruction; it is integral to language comprehension instruction as well. From classroom to classroom and grade-to-grade, HQIM ensure that all students have access to grade-appropriate texts that build knowledge about the world and important topics through a coherent sequence and spiraled practice with literacy skills and increasing complexity across grades.

Background knowledge is a key determinant in reading comprehension. Strong readers must be able to not only decode the words on a page but understand the meaning of individual words and utilize background schema to make connections and inferences as they read. Once students reach high school, college, and careers, they will need to be able to draw upon a wide body of knowledge about the world to be able to read a variety of complex texts. This knowledge-building through texts begins in Kindergarten and continues throughout schooling, but like our approach to foundational skills, this should follow a systematic, coherent approach where students build on topics year-to-year with increasing complexity in texts and topics. HQIM ensure that students have access to complex, grade-level texts that follow a coherent approach to knowledge-building and comprehension across grades.

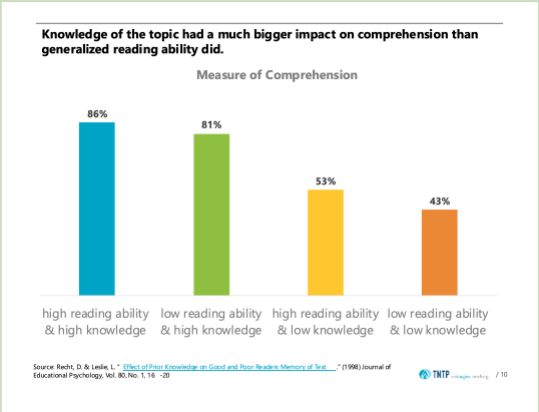
There are a few key principles on which effective reading comprehension instruction should focus and that HQIM will support. These principles inform the design of the reading comprehension HQIM approved by the Virginia Board of Education:

- **Knowledge and Vocabulary:** Instruction should follow a knowledge-rich scope & sequence.
- **Meaning-Focused Instruction:** Instruction should ask students to think deeply about the implicit and explicit meanings of their texts.
- **Text Complexity:** All students should receive frequent practice with complex grade-level texts that ensure they develop increasingly sophisticated syntax, vocabulary, and language.

### Knowledge and Vocabulary

Several important studies have established the importance of knowledge and vocabulary in reading comprehension. The most famous of these, referred to as "The Baseball Study," divided students into groups based on reading proficiency and knowledge about baseball, and then gave each group a text about a baseball game.

The researchers were surprised to find that knowledge about baseball appeared to have a much larger effect on comprehension than did reading ability. In fact, even students with low reading ability but high baseball knowledge had much higher rates of comprehension than students with high reading ability but low knowledge about baseball. Though surprising, these findings make sense. Baseball, like many topics, is full of context-specific terms like "homerun," "strikeout," "stolen base," and "foul ball." If students are unfamiliar with such terms, they will struggle to comprehend any text on the topic, regardless of prior ability.




This tells us that to teach students to read, we must teach them *content* and develop their background knowledge and vocabulary alongside their ability to decode. The best reading comprehension HQIM reflect this research, taking a systematic approach to knowledge building by designing units around clear bodies of knowledge that build upon one another within and across grades. Take the sample K-5 literacy HQIM scope & sequence below. Note the breadth of topics covered, including geology, biology, astronomy, anatomy, US history, world history, myths, literature, and poetry. Also note how the topics outlined in blue and yellow build over the course of each grade, systematically deepening student understanding of the topic over time.

| GRADE K | GRADE 1 | GRADE 2 | GRADE 3 | GRADE 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nursery Rhymes | Fables and Stories | Fairy Tales & Tall Tales | Classic Tales – The Wind in the Willows | Personal Narratives |
| The Five Senses | The Human Body | Early Asian Civilizations | Classification of Animals | The Middle Ages |
| Stories | Different Lands, Similar Stories | The Ancient Greek Civilization | The Human Body | King Arthur |
| Plants | Early World Civilizations | Greek Myths | The Ancient Roman Civilization | Poetry |
| Farms | Early American Civilizations | The Way of 1812 | Light and Sound | Geology |
| Native Americans | Astronomy | Cycles in Nature | The Viking Age | American Revolution |
| Kings & Queens | The History of the Earth | Westward Expansion | Astronomy – Solar System & Beyond | US Constitution |
| Seasons & Weather | Animals & Habitats | Insects | Native Americans | Treasure Island |
| Columbus & the Pilgrims | Fairy Tales | The U.S. Civil War | European Exploration of North America | |
| Colonial Towns | A New Nation | The Human Body | Colonial America | |
| Taking Care of the Earth | Frontier Explorers | Immigration | Ecology | |
| Presidents & American Symbols | | Fighting for a Cause | | |

## Meaning-Focused Instruction

Rather than focusing on knowledge building, lower quality instructional materials are often organized around reading strategies such as "find main idea" or "summarizing." The problem with this skills-focused approach, however, is that it doesn't work. If you give students 20 disconnected short passages and ask them to find the main idea of each—and students struggle with this task—we can't determine if that's because they don't understand the main idea or if it's because they lack the knowledge, vocabulary, decoding ability, or reading fluency to comprehend each passage.

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*Skills practice [in reading comprehension] is a time waster. It's like pushing the elevator button twice. It makes you feel better, perhaps, but the elevator doesn't come any more quickly.*

-Dr. Tim Shanahan Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois at Chicago

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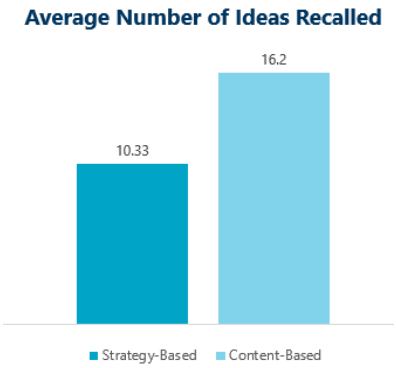
Researchers have found that a content-focused approach to instruction leads to greater comprehension than a more skills-focused approach. This study had 5th graders read the same text across multiple classrooms. Some classes used open-ended, content-based questions (e.g. *Why did the author describe it as "funny" to read words that "stood still"?*) whereas others used strategy- or skills-based questions (e.g. *What are strategies you can use to monitor your comprehension while reading? How do you determine main idea?*). Students in the content-based classrooms showed nearly 60% better recall of the texts than did students in the strategies-based classrooms.




### When is skills-based instruction appropriate in reading comprehension?

Though the research doesn't support explicit instruction of reading strategies or skills like "find main idea," there is a place for explicit instruction in reading comprehension when it comes to language structures (i.e. how written language is organized: syntax, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) and literacy knowledge (i.e. genres of literature, text features, print concepts, etc.). In these situations, explicit instruction is both necessary and helpful. In general, however, when teaching texts, curriculum and instruction should focus on helping students to make meaning of those texts. Even when explicitly teaching concepts like text features, we should still ensure that students are using those features to make greater meaning of their texts.

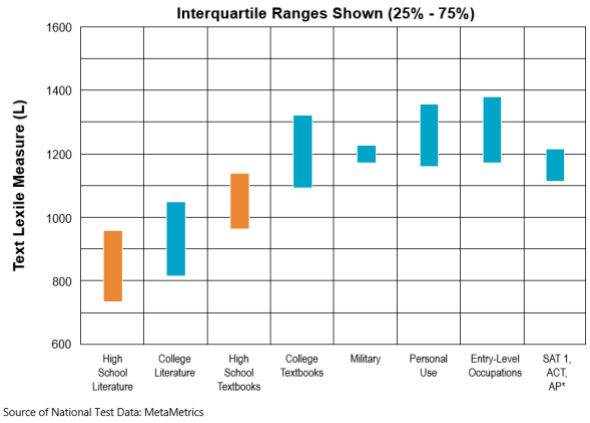
The literacy HQIM approved by the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) take this research into account and ensures that lessons and instruction use text-dependent questions that focus students on the content and meaning of the specific texts they are reading rather than drilling down on isolated skills.

Further, these materials align with the revised English Language Arts standards. Therefore, the research, materials, and standards are now in complete alignment. This benefits teachers by ensuring that they don't need to create their own text-based questions and tasks but can instead use the strong text-dependent questions from their HQIM.

## Text Complexity

In addition to building knowledge & vocabulary and focusing on making meaning of text, we must also ensure that *all* students receive regular practice with complex text. A study by Metametrics, the organization behind Lexile levels (a measure of text complexity), showed that the average texts students read in high school are far less complex than texts they will be asked to read in college or the workforce, even in entry level or military positions.

Further, researchers from the ACT have shown that the ability to comprehend complex text is the *only* thing that predicted student success on the college entrance exam. Most test-takers were able to answer questions about simple and slightly challenging texts at similar rates. But students who failed to meet ACT's college readiness threshold (a Reading score of 21 or higher) flatlined on any question regarding complex text. Students who met the readiness benchmark, however, were able to answer more questions correctly regarding complex text passages.

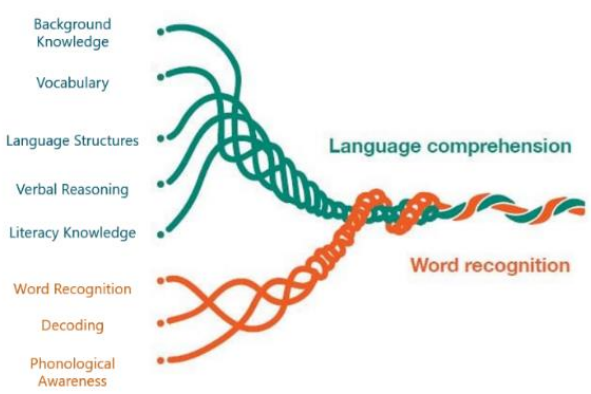


Source of National Test Data: MetaMetrics

This tells us that we must give *all* students regular exposure to and practice with complex text, beginning from the very earliest grades. But oftentimes, out of good intentions, we deprive students of opportunities to engage with complex text. For instance, many of us still give students leveled readers pitched at students' current reading levels. But if we only ever allow struggling readers to read low-level texts, how will they ever develop the knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding of language they need to read the complex text that will be required of them in college or career? These practices may be contributing to the ever-widening achievement gap: students on grade level are given more and asked to do more, while students who are below are given less and asked to do less. The results are both sad and predictable.

HQIM ensure that all texts are grade-level appropriate in their complexity. As a result, all students—regardless of background and prior performance—are exposed year after year to the sort of complex language, ideas, and vocabulary that they need practice with to develop into proficient readers who are prepared to enter college or the workforce after graduation. In addition, the English Language Arts Standards include tools to help leaders ensure that HQIM meet the complexity expectations of text.

## Closing




High-quality instructional materials are a huge benefit to student learning because they incorporate the most up-to-date research and evidence about how students learn to read. The English Language Arts Standards and HQIM approved by the Virginia Board of Education attend to both word recognition/decoding and reading/language comprehension, for both are essential in developing proficient readers. If students cannot recognize or decode words, they will never become fluent, automatic readers. And if they lack the background knowledge, vocabulary, and understanding of language to comprehend that which they decode, they will never become comprehending readers. By incorporating strong instructional practices on both strands of reading, HQIM provide students their best opportunity at developing into fluent and comprehending readers.

While the following chapters will cover the key components of effective HQIM implementation, VDOE felt it was critical to first ground stakeholders in the research behind why high-quality curriculum matters and how students learn to read. Understanding these tenets can help divisions make the best choices for their students and build investment & understanding in the monumental change that high-quality materials require. It is critical that division and school leaders can speak to this research to build investment in new literacy curriculum adoption. Teachers must understand the research to appreciate how HQIM are designed and understand how to effectively implement their materials and evidence-based literacy instruction. The Virginia Literacy Partnerships (VLP) and the Virginia Department of Education offer numerous professional learning resources for deepening understanding of this science-based reading research. Additional resources can be found below.

## Resources:

- Science-based reading research and professional learning supports from Virginia Literacy Partnerships

The following are articles for deepening understanding of science-based reading instruction. Divisions and schools may want to assign these for reading to deepen stakeholder understanding of evidence-based literacy practices.

- The Push for Phonics-Based Reading Instruction in Schools, Time Magazine
- Four Things You Need to Know About the New Reading Wars, The Hechinger Report
- Want Better Readers? Spend Less Time Teaching Kids to Find the Main Idea, by Matt Barnum
- The Science of Reading Explained, by Cindy Jaban

# **Part II:** Developing an HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy

Though high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) can lead to greater student achievement, simply adopting new materials is not a miracle cure. A 2019 study from Harvard's Center for Educational Policy Research points to the complexity of curriculum implementation, finding that when teachers use HQIM inconsistently with little training and support, they do not see improvements in student outcomes despite more rigorous instructional materials.

Effective HQIM implementation requires a complete overhaul in how we think about instructional materials. In the past, curriculum has been something that educators could dip into sporadically and use as they saw fit, interspersing adopted curriculum with their own instructional activities or content found online. Professional learning and instructional coaching was often content- and curriculum-agnostic, led without a clear understanding of the materials or evidence-based literacy practices. These old approaches to curriculum will no longer suffice. HQIM must be used with fidelity and teachers must be supported and developed to deeply understand how to use their materials in alignment the science-based reading research. This is a massive shift to how school divisions have approached curriculum in the past and it requires that divisions articulate a clear and comprehensive literacy strategy for doing so.

The remainder of this playbook will walk readers through the key components of an effective literacy strategy. School divisions should use these best practices to inform their Division Literacy Plans outlining their strategies for implementing HQIM and evidence-based reading instruction in 2024-25.

## What makes an effective literacy strategy?

In a 2023 case study, TNTP looked at what led certain school systems to be more successful than others at implementing HQIM and improving literacy instruction & outcomes. The case study found that more successful school divisions shared several key traits: they had stronger literacy support systems in place with clearer roles & responsibilities, deeper investment, regular HQIM-based development, and high levels of accountability to monitor & follow through on priorities. The study ultimately identified seven levers—outlined below—that successful divisions activated as part of their literacy strategies. In the case study, divisions with higher ratings in these seven areas saw better average instructional ratings *and* stronger student growth.

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*Divisions with stronger literacy strategies achieved*
***higher instructional ratings** and **greater student growth**.*

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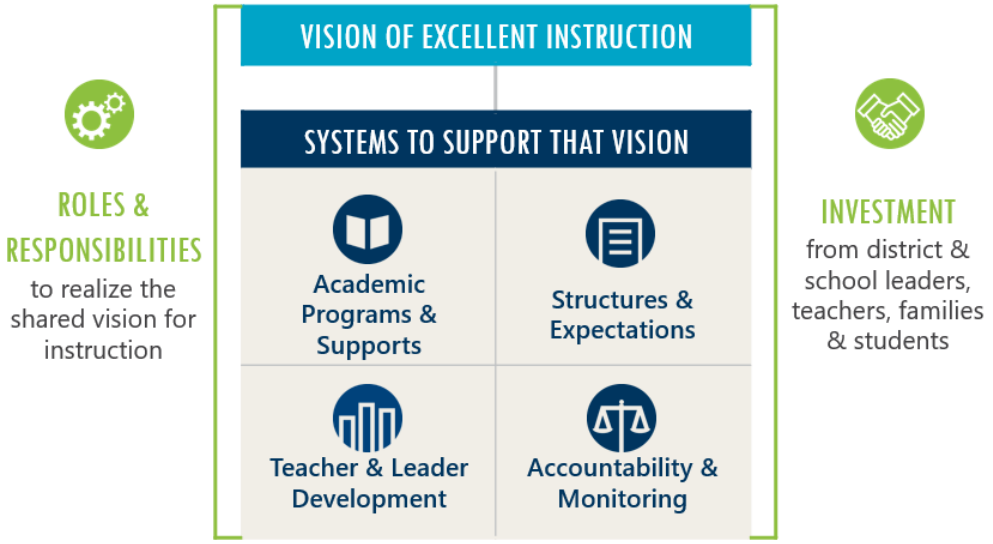
## The Levers of an HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy




**Vision**:
What should excellent instruction look like?

**Investment:**
Are stakeholders at every level invested in the vision?

**Roles & Responsibilities:**
Do stakeholders at all levels have clear roles in how they support the vision?

**Academic Programs & Supports:**
Do teachers use high-quality, coherent materials across Tier I, II, & III?

**Structures & Expectations**:
Are structures in place to support teachers to maximize their HQIM and achieve the vision?

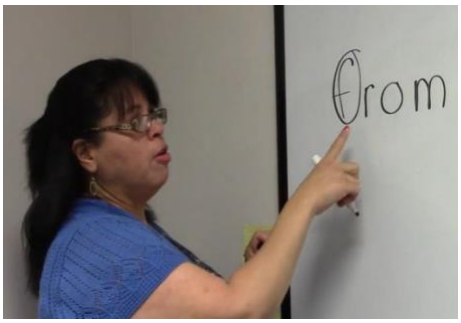
**Teacher & Leader Development:**
Are regular development structures in place to support stakeholders to achieve the vision?

**Accountability & Monitoring:**
Are stakeholders held accountable for monitoring progress and moving toward the vision?

The following chapters will walk through these levers in greater detail, covering each of the key components of an effective HQIM-based literacy strategy. Divisions may use the suggestions and resources within each chapter to develop their Division Literacy Plans outlining how they will successfully implement HQIM and develop evidence-based literacy instruction across the division.

# **Chapter 3:** Developing a Literacy Vision

A clear vision for effective literacy instruction sets the bar for what is expected across all classrooms and serves as the division's "north star," aligning stakeholders on a common goal. A strong literacy vision should align to the science of how children learn to read, clearly articulate expectations for what strong literacy instruction should look like across classrooms, and include measures for success that allow you to determine whether literacy instruction is working.

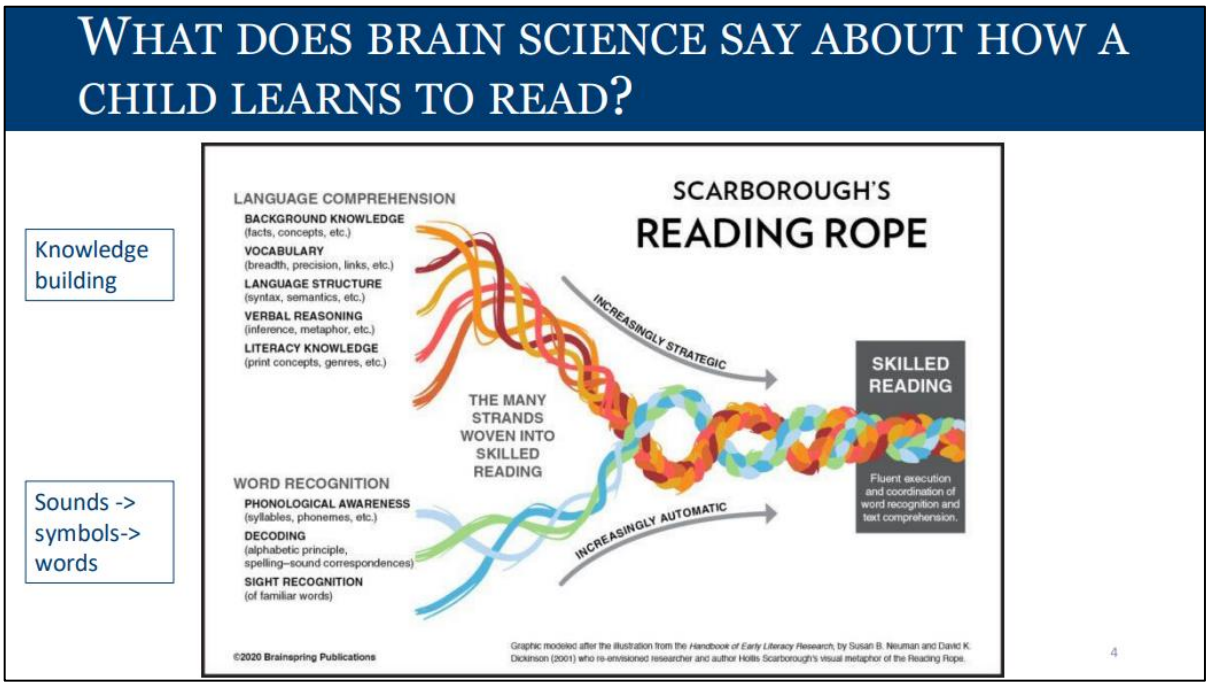



## Process for Developing a Literacy Vision

**a.** Understand the Reading Science
**b.** Articulate What Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction Should Look Like
**c.** Establish Goals & Success Metrics
**d.** Develop Your Literacy Vision

### Understand the Reading Science

A strong literacy vision should reflect the science about how students learn to read. These evidence-based practices should form the backbone and expectations for literacy instruction across all classrooms. Divisions should not set their vision or goals without first understanding the breadth of research outlined in chapters 1 and 2 of this playbook. It is especially important to understand that skilled reading only comes when students master both the language comprehension *and* word recognition strands of reading instruction. Both sets of competencies will require significant attention in the early grades, while later grades will focus more on language comprehension.



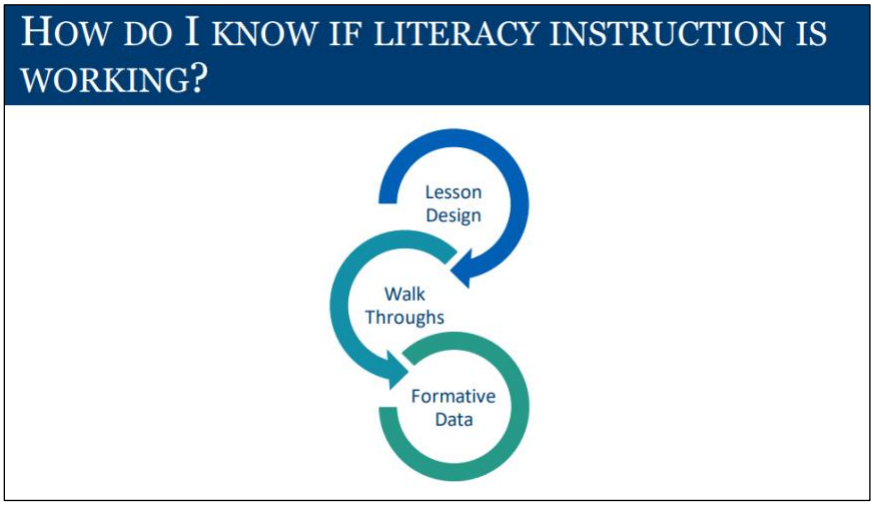

## Articulate What Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction Should Look Like

After understanding the science-based reading research, it is critical to translate that research into practice by articulating expectations for what literacy instruction should look like across classrooms. This will help set baseline expectations across all division schools and ensure a common vision for all teachers and leaders. Chapter 2 of this playbook outlines the science-based reading research and how it translates into classroom practice.

| What Does That Look Like In A Literacy Classroom | What Does That NOT Look Like In A Literacy Classroom |
|---|---|
| 1. **"Sounds First" Approach**: Early grades should have a strong focus on systematic, sequential, explicit instruction in decoding (Phonemic Awareness and Phonics) and accuracy. "Sounds First" Approach. | 1. Approaches that ask student to **guess**. |
| 2. **Practice:** Students Need to practice a "sounds first" approach to building decoding and encoding skills daily. | 2. Reliance on **pictures or cues**. |
| 3. **Knowledge Building:** Classrooms should also have fluent reading models that help students build background and content knowledge. | 3. Lessons that focus on **one part** of reading. |
| 4. **Comprehensive Daily Lessons:** Students should see the FULL continuum of reading every day. | 4. **Over prompting by teachers—lack** of student-centered practice. |

## Establish Goals & Success Metrics

Divisions should set goals and success metrics to help them determine whether literacy instruction is working. Formative and summative assessment data will obviously tell us if student learning is improving, and we should pay close attention to formative benchmarks throughout the year. But divisions should also look closely at the quality of instruction and student work to determine whether evidence-based literacy practices are taking root and growing across the division.



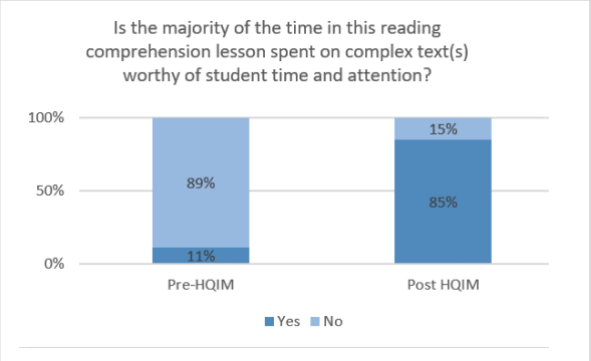

### *Suggested HQIM & Literacy Goals*

Below is a list of areas in which divisions may want to consider setting goals. These goals align to the science-based reading research and key practices required by HQIM. VDOE recommends that divisions track progress across all these areas, if possible, and set specific goals around 2-4 of them. Goals & success metrics should be quantifiable, measurable, and time bound. By tracking progress in each of these areas, divisions will have a clearer sense of their progress and will be better able to adjust course as circumstances change.

| Area | Goal | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Reading Comprehension Instructional Goals** | High-Quality Text | How often do comprehension lessons focus the majority of time on reading high-quality, knowledge-rich text? |
| **Reading Comprehension Instructional Goals** | Meaning-Focused Instruction | How often do comprehension lessons focus questions & tasks on building understanding of the key text ideas, details, and meaning, and require use of text-evidence and details? |
| **Reading Comprehension Instructional Goals** | Student Ownership | How often do students do most of the work in the classroom (the reading, thinking, writing, discussing, etc.)? |
| **K-2 Foundational Skills Instructional Goals** | Systematic Instruction | How often is foundational skills instruction systematic and aligned to a logical scope & sequence that strategically layers new skills upon earlier skills? |

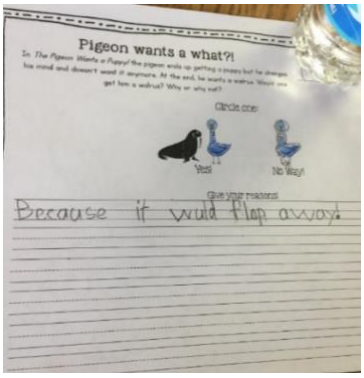
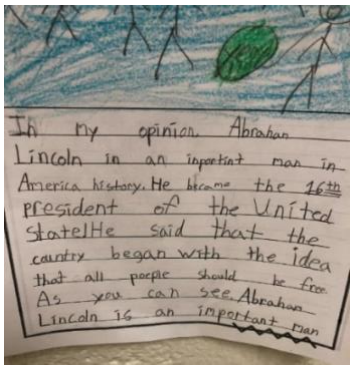
| Area | Goal | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **K-2 Foundational Skills Instructional Goals** | Explicit Instruction | How often does foundational skills instruction make the target skill (sound, pattern, etc.) clear and explicit for students? |
| **K-2 Foundational Skills Instructional Goals** | Student Practice | How often do students receive effective & supported practice opportunities to develop mastery of target skills? |
| **K-2 Foundational Skills Instructional Goals** | Assessment & Mastery | How often in foundational skills lessons do teachers check for student understanding and address misconceptions to support systematic skills mastery? |
| **Student Work Goals** | Student Work | How often is student work sufficiently rigorous and aligned to the grade-level standards? |
| **HQIM Goals** | Use of Curriculum | How often do teachers use their instructional materials as designed and intended? |

## Establishing a Pre-HQIM Baseline




For year 1 of HQIM implementation, divisions may want to do an analysis of current instructional trends to establish pre-HQIM baselines from which to measure progress. Such an instructional assessment would allow divisions to see how often students receive instruction aligned to science-based reading research. This data can build the case for why HQIM adoption is necessary and establish a baseline from which to set goals and measure progress. For instance, a division's instructional analysis might show that reading comprehension lessons rarely feature complex text, or that K-2 foundational skills lessons rarely provide explicit phonics instruction. Such findings can help drive the case for why stronger materials are needed and give divisions a pre-HQIM baseline to set goals and measure progress against. For example, if a division's analysis shows that just 20% of assignments are sufficiently rigorous, a good goal for 2024-25 might be to have at least 50% of assignments align to grade level standards.

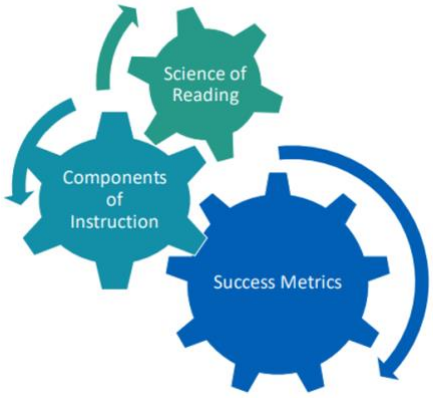
As part of their instructional analysis, divisions should also collect student work samples to drive home the need for HQIM adoption. By contrasting assignments from HQIM vs non-HQIM, divisions can show the deeper rigor required by higher quality curriculum. In the assignments below, the non-HQIM task simply asks for a student's personal opinion and doesn't require any analysis of worthwhile text. The student answers the prompt without even writing a complete sentence. The HQIM assignment on the right is also an opinion essay but requires students to share in writing the knowledge they have learned about Abraham Lincoln through reading complex, grade-level text. Such clear contrasts drive home the need for stronger materials.

| Non-HQIM | HQIM |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

## Develop Your Literacy Vision

After articulating clear literacy instructional expectations aligned to science-based reading research and establishing key success metrics, divisions are ready to set a literacy vision to guide their literacy work and invest stakeholders in a common goal. The literacy vision should align to science-based reading principles, guide division priorities, and align stakeholders on a common vision of what is expected across literacy classrooms. A sample literacy vision is included below; additional sample visions can be found here.

**VDOE Components of a Literacy Vision**




**In _____ County Schools,**
**excellent literacy instruction will consistently:**

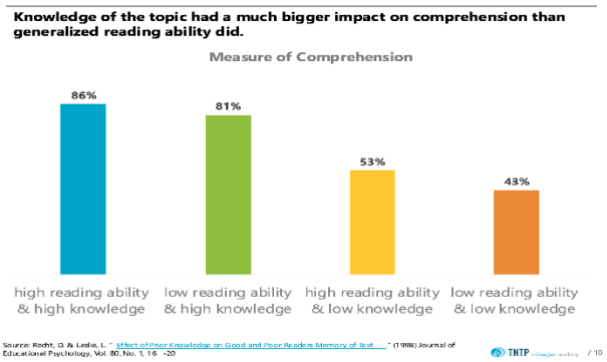
1. Ensure teachers and leaders focus on reading science and the importance of HQIM
2. Utilize HQIM as the center of their lesson
3. Focus on reading and making meaning of complex text that builds students' knowledge of the world
4. Support EVERY student in doing the thinking and achieving the target outcomes of the lesson
5. Connect foundational reading skills to practice in every lesson to support students to develop mastery of newly acquired skills

## Resources:

- Divisions can look at these sample instructional visions as they plan their own.
- Virginia Division Literacy Plan and Division Literacy Plan Instructions
- Guidance on assessing your instructional state and student academic experience found here.
- The VA Instructional Practice Guide (available April 2024) is a walk through tool aligned to the science-based reading research. It can be used to establish a baseline of instructional practice and measure instructional progress.
- Student work analysis tools can be found here. Additional student work samples (from HQIM and non HQIM) can be found here. It is recommended that leaders find student work samples from within their division to help build local investment in curriculum change.

# **Chapter 4:** Building Investment

School systems spend significant time and money adopting new curricula, but often overlook the key step of building investment. This can doom new HQIM. An underinvested teacher may "use" HQIM in the loosest sense possible—without understanding or integrity—and then conclude that the materials don't work. Such disinvested teachers are likely to return to previous materials that they are more familiar with, and students may suffer. To avoid such scenarios, divisions should carefully plan to invest all key stakeholders in the HQIM adoption process and any newly adopted materials.




## Key Steps for Building Investment

**a.** Identify Key Stakeholders
**b.** Build Investment in the Need for HQIM
**c.** Build Investment in Adopted HQIM
**d.** Maintain Investment

### Identify Key Stakeholders

Divisions must first identify key stakeholders impacted by curriculum change, including teachers, leaders, community partners, family members, students, and board members. Each of these groups will have different interests and needs that must be addressed to ensure they are invested in making HQIM adoption successful. All stakeholders must understand the division literacy vision and goals, how HQIM support that vision, and how and when curriculum adoption will occur and what benefits it will bring.

### Build Investment in the Need for HQIM

Asking all educators to center their daily instruction in the new instructional materials can be a big change. We must build a common understanding of why this change is necessary with classroom educators, school leaders, and community members. Below are some of the key messages that should be shared with stakeholders to build their understanding of, and investment in, HQIM change.

### *HQIM Will Support Divisions to Achieve Their Goals*

Divisions should share their visions for excellent literacy instruction along with results from the instructional state analysis, goals, and priorities for HQIM implementation. This will establish a common vision across stakeholders, show whether current materials are meeting the vision, bolster the rationale for adoption, and clarify what changes and outcomes divisions expect to see.

**In _____ County Schools, excellent literacy instruction will consistently:**

1. Ensure teachers and leaders focus on reading science and the importance of HQIM
2. Utilize HQIM as the center of their lesson
3. Focus on reading and making meaning of complex text that builds students' knowledge of the world
4. Support EVERY student in doing the thinking and achieving the target outcomes of the lesson
5. Connect foundational reading skills to practice in every lesson to support students to develop mastery of newly acquired skills

### *HQIM Provide Students Stronger Academic Experiences and Improve Outcomes*

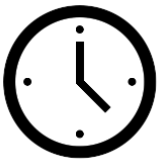
Divisions should communicate to stakeholders the research outlined in *Part I: Why High-Quality Instructional Materials?* sharing the impact of HQIM on student learning and the science-based reading research. This will help stakeholders understand the rationale for HQIM change, how the change will benefit students, and how HQIM align to research-based practices.

*When low performing students received access to stronger content, they made **7.3 months of additional learning gains** compared to similarly low performing students who did have access to strong instructional content.*

Source: The Opportunity Myth, TNTP

### *HQIM Adoption Will Occur Transparently and With Stakeholder Input*

Communicate with stakeholders the timeline and process for curriculum adoption; explaining why, when and how adoption is occurring; how stakeholders can get involved & provide input; and any next steps they can expect. Stakeholders should never feel surprised by the adoption. Giving everyone time to prepare for change is key.



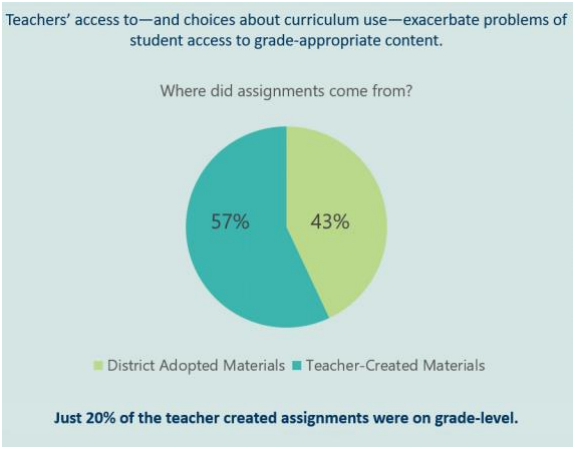
### *HQIM Provide Consistency and Equal Opportunities for Learning for Every Students*

Adopting a single, coherent curriculum across schools will mean that all students are held to the same expectations and effectively experience the adopted Standards of Learning. Students in the lowest performing schools and students with every teacher will receive the same content and learning opportunities as students in the highest performing schools. And in divisions with high mobility, students will maintain coherent experiences when they move or change schools.

*In The Opportunity Myth, TNTP found that students of color and low-income students are **25% less likely** to receive grade-appropriate assignments and **50% less likely** to receive strong instruction than whiter, wealthier students. Adopting HQIM can ensure that such inequities do not occur.*

### *HQIM Provide Stronger Content and Save Teachers Time*

A Rand Corporation study showed that over 82% of teachers report finding or creating their own materials at least once per week. In a TNTP study, teachers reported spending nearly seven hours per week finding or creating their own materials (nearly an entire workday!). In that same study, TNTP analyzed the assignments teachers created or found, and discovered that only 20% of them met grade-level standards.




By adopting and using HQIM, teachers will have consistent access to high-quality, grade-level content, and they will no longer spend significant time searching for or creating materials for daily lessons. Instead, teachers can use their new materials to focus on the needs of their students and creating instructional experiences grounded in materials and supports tailored to their needs.

### *HQIM Does Not Mean a Loss of Teacher Autonomy*

Many teachers fear a loss of autonomy when new curriculum is introduced. These fears are understandable, for HQIM *does* require teachers use their materials to ground all of their daily instructional experiences. That said, teachers will now be able to focus on *how* to engage students in that content in the daily HQIM. As teachers become more versed with the daily lesson plans within the HQIM, teachers should be encouraged to think deeply about how to ensure students not only engage fully in that learning, but that students own the learning within the daily lesson.

## Build Investment in Adopted HQIM

Investment should not end after adoption process. If anything, *more* attention must be paid to ensure that stakeholders are invested in understanding and implementing their newly adopted materials. Investment strategies should switch from building investment in selecting the HQIM to building investment in how the division's adopted materials will be used to meet the division's literacy vision.

### *Develop Teacher Understanding of Adopted HQIM and Science-Based Reading Instruction*

When teachers understand their materials, they use them more effectively, students have more success, and teacher investment grows. For instance, many K-2 teachers—accustomed to always reading aloud to their youngest students—mistakenly assume that they should read aloud to their K-2 skills readers. But when teachers understand that decodables are designed to be decoded by *students*, teachers are more likely to use them as opportunities for students to practice and develop decoding mastery. When this happens, students will develop into stronger readers, and teachers' investment in their materials will grow. Divisions should ensure teachers are supported to understand and use their new materials well. Recommended development and supports are outlined in detail in the playbook section *Launch Development and Support Structures.* But here and here are examples of trainings that help teachers understand how their curriculum is designed and aligned to science-based reading principles.

## Maintain Investment

Investment building is not a one-time action. It must be constantly maintained and prioritized. Consider the following strategies.

### *Continually Build Expertise in Adopted HQIM and Science-Based Reading Practices*

Development, support, and training must be ongoing. A single training on newly adopted HQIM does not make teachers experts. It takes many repetitions and extensive practice for new learning & practices to sink in. And teacher & leader turnover is constant, meaning that learning and expectations must be continually reinforced. For this reason, the best development is not one-off trainings, but ongoing structures and practices such as guided weekly lesson planning that supports leaders and educators to continually develop and deepen their expertise in the reading science and their HQIM.

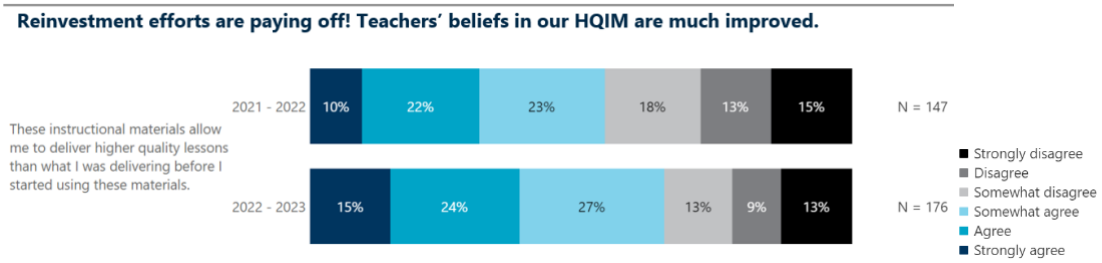
### *Celebrate HQIM Success*

Divisions should widely celebrate HQIM successes and high-quality instruction. It can be hard to maintain investment when we are only told what we do wrong. But when we see progress and are celebrated for it, investment naturally follows. Divisions should use collected walk through data to show progress toward their literacy vision & goals and publicly celebrate when teachers use materials well. Such celebration will go far in building and maintaining investment.

### *Make Investment a Priority and Measure Progress*

If educator investment has been neglected, it can be difficult to rebuild and ensure HQIM implementation after materials are purchased. In one system, teacher survey results showed perceptions around HQIM dropping after the initial excitement of adoption had faded. And leadership noticed that many teachers had drifted back to older materials and habits. They redoubled efforts to

support understanding of the "why" of HQIM, celebrated HQIM successes in their literacy vision, and elevated teachers' positive feelings toward their HQIM (see examples of teachers praising HQIM here). As a result, teacher investment in their HQIM shot up in 2022-23 after falling to an all-time low in 2021-22. To ensure that investment drift does not occur, division leadership should continue to focus on elevating educator voice throughout the implementation process of HQIM.

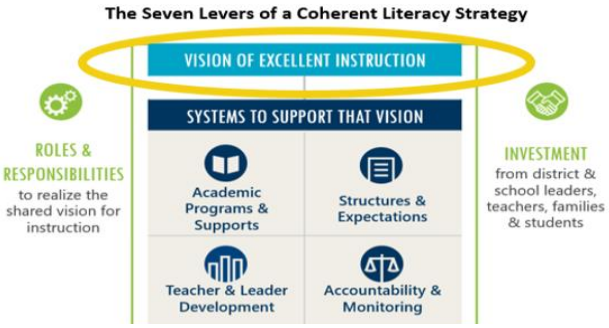



## Resources:

- Recommendations for building & leading educator-based curriculum adoption committees, Ed Reports
- A self-assessment for identifying baseline community engagement levels: Community Engagement Self-Assessment from TNTP
- Resources for families:
    - Curriculum-specific resources for engaging families in curriculum via family literacy gatherings: Family Literacy Night Kit from TN LIFT
    - Family literacy resources from Virginia Literacy Partnershipshttps://sites.google.com/view/tennessee-lift-network/resources/family-engagement?authuser=0
- Sample training that builds understanding in the science-based reading research: The Science of Reading, by Amplify
- Example trainings that build teacher understanding & investment in specific curricula and that outline how principles of science-based reading research are built into the curriculum: CKLA and Wonders.
- Video of an exemplar foundational skills lesson that can be used to instruct and invest stakeholders in evidence-based literacy instruction and HQIM implementation

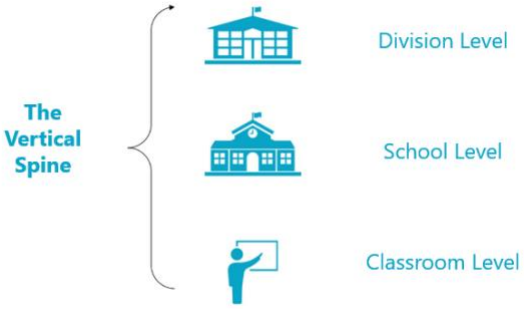
# **Chapter 5:** Defining Clear Roles & Responsibilities

Divisions must ensure that all stakeholders along the vertical spine of the system—from the superintendent to classroom teachers—have clearly defined roles & responsibilities for achieving literacy goals and HQIM priorities. When there are gaps in the vertical spine—for instance division leadership may have clear roles in HQIM implementation, but school leaders do not—implementation is likely to suffer.



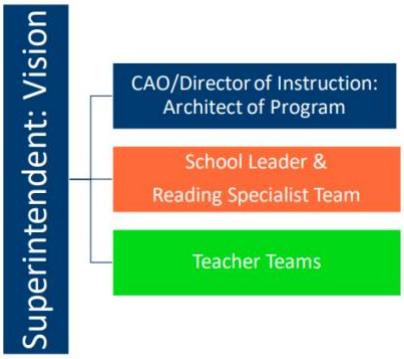

## Key Step in Defining Clear Roles & Responsibilities:

**a.** Identify the Roles of *All* Stakeholders in HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy




### Identify the Role of All Stakeholders in HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy

Divisions should clearly specify the roles that teachers, school leaders, and central office staff play along the division spine to ensure that the priorities and strategies of their literacy plans are implemented effectively. When there are gaps in investment and responsibility along the division spine, systems generally fail to advance their goals, implement HQIM effectively, or develop strong instructional practices. The principal is a key stakeholder in this process.




For example, in one school system implementing HQIM since 2017, the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) set a clear literacy vision & priorities, and hired instructional coaches at every school to support implementation. The district's superintendent, however, prioritized school leader autonomy and refrained from establishing the CAO's priorities for school leaders. Further, reading specialists were directly supervised by school leaders, they were not as responsive to the literacy priorities set by the CAO. Due to these gaps in investment and lack of clear roles & responsibilities at the school level, the division's literacy priorities floundered, and both literacy instruction and use of HQIM has stagnated.

#### *Recommended Roles & Responsibilities in HQIM Implementation*

Below is a list of the key responsibilities for all division stakeholders in implementing HQIM and developing science-based reading instructional practices. When developing their literacy strategies,

divisions should identify the roles and responsibilities of *all* key stakeholders along the vertical spine of the division.

**Recommended HQIM/Literacy Role and Responsibilities**
**Planning Phase: Preparing for Implementation**
(From Winter 2024-Summer 2024)

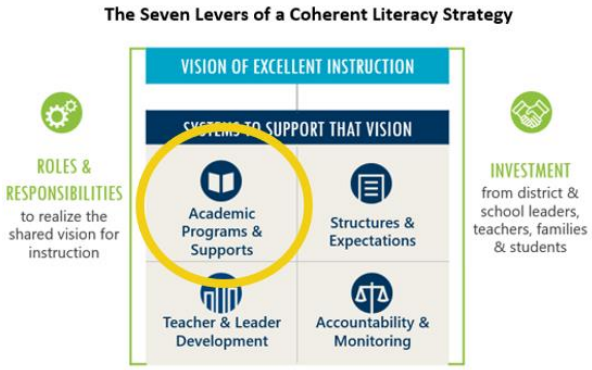
As divisions prepare for the initial implementation of HQIM in Fall 2024, they should focus on engaging & investing stakeholders in HQIM change, and planning the processes & procedures they will put in place to enable the conditions for successful HQIM implementation.

| Superintendent | Division Literacy/HQIM Lead (Key Instructional Architect) | School Leadership (Principal AND Reading Specialist) | Teachers | Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Role:**<br>Vision setter, Investment builder, Expectation setter, Accountability | **Role:**<br>Same as Division Leader plus: Strategy developer, Lead HQIM trainer, HQIM Adoption Committee Leader | **Role:**<br>School-level investment builder, Expectation setter, Implementation lead | **Role:**<br>Expertise Builder | **Role:**<br>Input provider; Owner of learning |
| **Responsibilities**<br><br>Establish & communicate HQIM adoption & implementation as a key division priority.<br><br>Understand the HQIM research; Build investment & understanding in the need for HQIM adoption.<br><br>Establish a division-level HQIM lead (e.g. CAO, Literacy Director, etc.) to spearhead adoption & implementation efforts. Work with HQIM lead to:<br>• Assess current state of instruction<br>• Establish a division-wide vision for excellent literacy instruction<br>• Establish literacy/HQIM priorities and goals<br>• Develop an HQIM-based literacy strategy<br>• Communicate all the above to stakeholders | **Responsibilities**<br><br>Understand the HQIM research; Build investment & understanding in the need for HQIM adoption.<br><br>Assess current state of instruction<br><br>Develop an HQIM-based literacy strategy<br><br>Establish & train curriculum adoption committee/s consisting of key stakeholders. Solicit input from a wide array of stakeholders.<br><br>With adoption committee, review curricula and make adoption recommendation.<br><br>Design structures and processes for unit and lesson preparation, | **Responsibilities**<br><br>Understand the HQIM research; Build investment and understanding across teachers in the need for HQIM adoption.<br><br>Communicate the division's literacy vision, priorities, goals and strategy.<br><br>Understand and develop expertise in the design and research of adopted HQIM.<br><br>Put in place support structures & roles to enable successful HQIM implementation. | **Responsibilities**<br><br>Understand the research behind HQIM and why quality materials matter.<br><br>Provide input and feedback on HQIM selection.<br><br>Through training, understand the design of adopted HQIM and how the materials align to the division literacy vision and science-based reading research.<br><br>Commit to using adopted HQIM with consistency, intentionality and integrity.<br><br>Through training, understand any new planning procedures, | **Responsibilities**<br><br>Provide feedback on academic experiences and goals.<br><br>Provide input and feedback on HQIM selection.<br><br>With guided support, understand learning expectations for the grade and how adopted HQIM will prepare students for these expectations.<br><br>With support, understand how academic expectations may shift with new, more rigorous HQIM. |

| Superintendent | Division Literacy/HQIM Lead (Key Instructional Architect) | School Leadership (Principal AND Reading Specialist) | Teachers | Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approve and purchase selected HQIM. Communicate adoption decision. Begin to build investment in the adoption.<br><br>Set clear expectations around HQIM use as a key driver toward the division's literacy vision. Communicate expectations, roles & responsibilities to all stakeholders.<br><br>Ensure time, supports, development and structures are put in place to allow teachers and leaders sufficient opportunity to understand and build investment in new HQIM | collaboration, learning, and feedback for teachers and leaders.<br><br>Create HQIM-based development plans for teachers, school leaders and other support staff<br><br>Set clear expectations around HQIM use. Communicate expectations, roles & responsibilities to all stakeholders.<br><br>Develop & launch trainings and supports | Develop expertise (your own or others'—e.g. coaches) in supporting teacher planning and implementation of adopted HQIM.<br><br>Lead school-level development to promote understanding of adopted HQIM<br><br>Develop progress monitoring plan. Ensure understanding of any new progress monitoring tools, etc. | tools, and expectations such as unit- and lesson-level HQIM-based lesson planning.<br><br>Carefully review & organize new materials, ensuring understanding prior to implementation.<br><br>Ask questions and collaborate to build understanding of new materials. | |

# **Chapter 6:** Adopting Strong HQIM and Preparing for Learning Acceleration

A literacy strategy means little if the actual literacy content that students learn is not strong. And putting stronger content in front of students is, of course, the main driver behind HQIM adoption. But adoption is also a chance for divisions to consider how HQIM can be used to provide students with coherent learning experiences that work together to accelerate students toward grade-level expectations.




## Key Steps to Adopting Strong HQIM and Structures for Coherence

- **a.** Share Adoption Process and Timeline
- **b.** Identify HQIM Selection Criteria
- **c.** Partner with Stakeholders in the HQIM Selection Process
- **d.** Select and Procure Materials
- **e.** Set Explicit HQIM Expectations
- **f.** HQIM and Aligned Systems

### Share Adoption Process and Timeline

Stakeholders should never be surprised by a new curriculum adoption. Leaders should outline a clear plan for when and how adoption will occur, how stakeholders can engage and provide feedback, who will make the final decisions, and the timeline on which decisions will be made.

### Identify HQIM Selection Criteria

All school divisions must select HQIM from the VBOE-approved curriculum list. Any materials from this list will be high-quality and aligned to science-based reading research. While all materials from the list are quality choices, divisions must still identify the selection criteria that will drive their decision and meet the needs of their unique stakeholders. For instance, if it is essential for a student population to have materials available in both English and Spanish, that should be made clear to stakeholders, and any materials not fully available in both languages should not be put forward for consideration. Sample HQIM selection criteria and resources are included below.

| Sample HQIM Selection Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| **Quality & rigor of the materials** | How well do the materials align to the science-based reading research? (Note: presence on the VBOE-approved list is an indicator of quality and alignment to the research.) A VDOE curriculum-review rubric with indicators aligned to the science-based reading research can be downloaded here. VDOE's ratings for each approved curriculum can be found here. |
| **Usability** | How easy are the materials to implement? It is recommended that curriculum adoption committees closely look at the materials during their reviews and don't *just* rely on external reviews. Teachers on the adoption team should practice delivering lessons from the materials—or even pilot the materials if possible—to get a better sense of what using the materials on a day-to-day basis is like. The more user-friendly a curriculum is the more likely teachers are to use the materials consistently and effectively. |
| **Suitability for specific student/family populations** | Each school division is unique, with its own characteristics, student demographics, and academic needs. This demands a tailored approach to HQIM adoption, ensuring that chosen materials align seamlessly with the context and requirements of each division. A division with a high proportion of Spanish-speaking students, for instance, might require a curriculum that is fully available in both English and Spanish. A curriculum with a heavy online footprint might not be appropriate for a division in which many families lack reliable home internet access. |
| **Resources and supports for successful implementation** | With a number of high-quality literacy materials available, making an adoption decision may come down to which curriculum provides the necessary resources and supports for effective implementation. For example: How much professional development do publishers provide? Do K-2 materials offer a high-quality foundational skills placement assessment to determine the specific skills and sound-spelling patterns that students have mastered? Is there clear guidance provided about how to address identified skills gaps in Tier I and/or Intervention? What benchmark assessments are provided and what information do they give? |
| **Support among key stakeholders** | As discussed, investment is a key factor to HQIM implementation. A disinvested teacher is likely to use new materials poorly, if at all. Therefore, divisions must build widespread support for new curriculum adoption and take the perspective of key stakeholders into account. If two sets of materials are equally strong, but one has greater support amongst stakeholders, divisions should generally go with the more supported option. Use surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions to collect feedback about what stakeholders want and value. Incorporate this feedback into the curriculum adoption committee's decision making. |

## Partner with Stakeholders in the HQIM Selection Process

When stakeholders are part of the decision-making process for HQIM adoption, they become more invested as they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the decision. Teachers are more likely to seek to understand their materials and how to utilize them effectively. Families and school board members are more likely to voice support for the materials. School leaders are more likely to prioritize use of the materials and support teachers to use them well. Divisions should identify their key stakeholders—including teachers, students, families, school leaders, and board members—and invite them to be part of the curriculum review and selection process. Consider including student voice in this process as well.

### *Form a Curriculum Adoption Committee*

VDOE recommends that divisions form a curriculum adoption committee consisting of members from key stakeholder groups tasked with reviewing and recommending curricula from the VBOE-approved list. Teachers who know their peers were part of the curriculum selection process are more likely to be invested in newly adopted materials than if they are simply informed of an adoption made by leaders. Divisions should include stakeholders in the curriculum review and selection process and seek broad input from stakeholders regarding what they value and want in a curriculum.

### *Survey Stakeholders*


Because only a small portion of stakeholders can serve on the curriculum adoption committee, divisions should seek broader input via surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions that seek to gather from the community what they most value and want in a new curriculum.

## Select and Procure Materials

After officially selecting HQIM, place the procurement order by in spring 2024 to ensure that materials arrive in time for distribution and to begin building investment & understanding in the materials. Ensure that school division fiscal teams are planning for purchase and ensure timely delivery of all resources. Share the final selection with all stakeholders—including the process and rationale that went into the decision—along with any next steps stakeholders should expect and when they will have opportunities to start learning more about the materials.

After materials arrive, be sure to attend to the logistics of distribution and unboxing. It is surprising how often HQIM implementation fails due the simple fact that new materials never make it out of the box.

### Set Explicit HQIM Expectations

Ensure that clear expectations are set with school leaders and teachers that adopted HQIM must be used consistently and with integrity, and should form the basis for all core instruction. Outside resources should not be used as they are rarely as strong as HQIM and typically are not designed as part of a coherent scope & sequence. Even outside resources that are based on HQIM, like those from Teachers Pay Teachers, usually vary in small but important ways that dilute the intentions of HQIM. When walking through instructional delivery, division- and school leaders should always use alongside the lesson materials to ensure that HQIM are being used with integrity, and to provide teachers feedback and coaching on their use of HQIM.

### HQIM and Aligned Systems

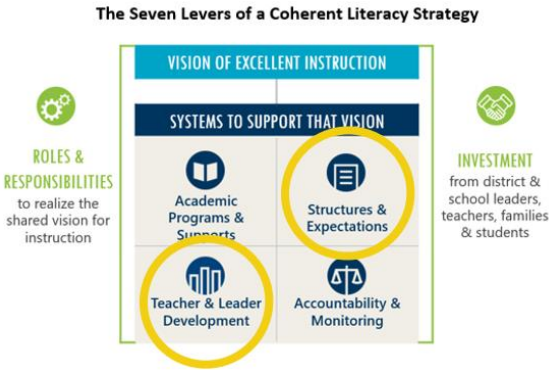
Your adopted HQIM is a part of your larger academic vision, systems of support, and instructional practices. You will want to take a broader assessment of your current instructional practices and supports to ensure alignment with your HQIM. Your instructional leadership team should review your division-wide assessments and expectations and align on which assessments should remain and which are no longer needed given the content and assessments in your HQIM. In addition, schools will need direction and support on how curriculum-based assessments support and supplement other assessments used in the division. Tiered systems of support and any other additional student support systems should also be evaluated and revised for tighter alignment to adopted HQIM. While this process of creating aligned systems will be an ongoing and iterative process, it is best to begin the HQIM adoption process with proactive planning around these key issues (see resource below on Instructional Coherence as a support in this process).

## Resources

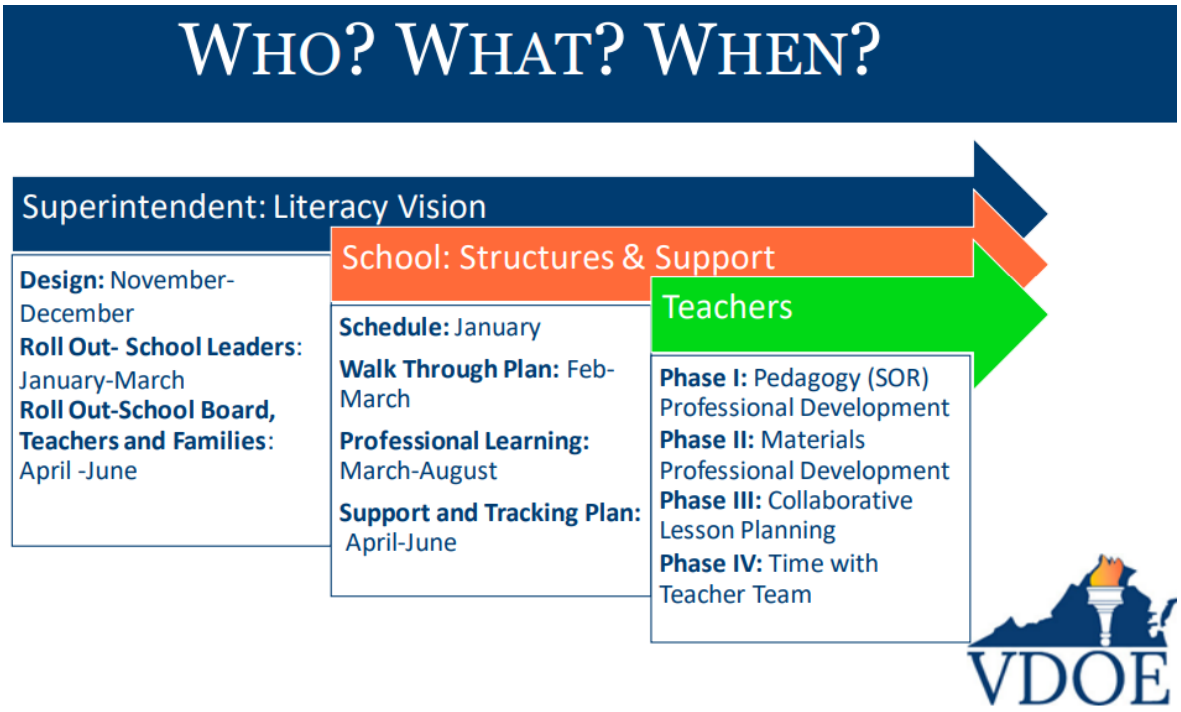
- Curriculum reviews and ratings:
  - VDOE website with the complete list of VBOE-Approved curriculum list (updated December 2023)
- Resource on Instructional Coherence:
  - Instructional Coherence: A Key to High-Quality Learning Acceleration for All Students, TNTP

## **Chapter 7:** Launching Development and Support Structures

An essential part of any strong literacy strategy includes professional learning and development structures that support teachers & leaders to understand evidence-based reading pedagogy, implement HQIM effectively, and achieve key literacy priorities. Divisions should launch their newly adopted HQIM with a full development plan and all necessary supports in place. This will ensure that teachers and leaders are prepared to tackle the challenging task of new HQIM implementation.




An effective suite of supports will include both trainings to familiarize teachers and leaders with new materials & evidence-based reading instructional practices, *and* regular support & development structures such as weekly lesson planning cycles and frequent HQIM-based walk throughs, coaching, and feedback. Division development plans and support structures should be outlined in the required Division Literacy Plan.




### Key Steps for Launching Development and Support Structures

**a.** Create HQIM Support & Development Structures
**b.** Develop Teacher & Leader Training Plan

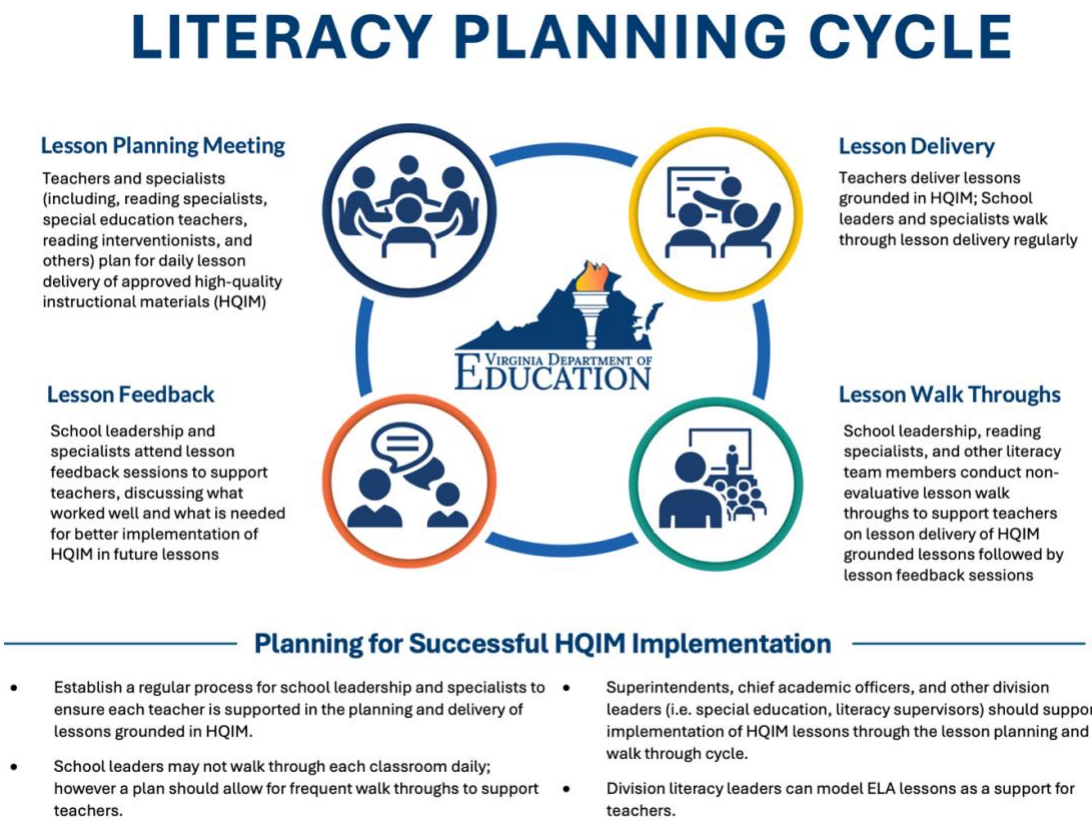
## Create HQIM Support & Development Structures

While trainings are critical for introducing new learning and beginning to build understanding, true expertise is built through ongoing practice and development. For instance, a training can introduce teachers to the design of their new HQIM, but regular support structures like HQIM-based lesson planning cycles and HQIM-based walk throughs & coaching will go far deeper in developing expertise.

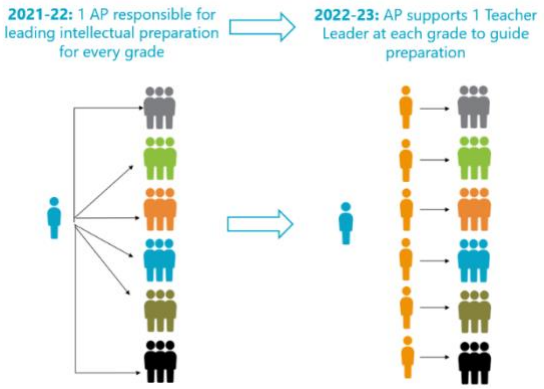
All divisions should put in place regular lesson preparation cycles in which school-level academic leaders and coaches:

- Support teachers to prepare for instruction by deeply internalizing what is most critical in their HQIM texts & lessons and plan for how they will ensure all students achieve key lesson objectives and understanding of key ideas in the text.
- Walk through instruction alongside HQIM materials to ensure enacted instruction meets the core intentions of the instruction and learning intended by HQIM.
- Provide instructional feedback and coaching to teachers about their preparation, use of HQIM, and their implementation and understanding of science-based reading instructional practices.

The graphic below demonstrates a literacy lesson planning cycle that divisions can use to support teachers as HQIM is being implemented. This cycle includes support from school leaders, specialists, superintendents, and division leaders as teachers plan for daily lesson delivery of HQIM.



Divisions should think carefully about how they implement their support & development structures. For example, one school system that began implementing HQIM in 2021-22 established guided weekly lesson planning at each grade as a key strategy for improving use of HQIM. But the responsibility for guiding these planning sessions fell to the APs of each school. As APs got busy, these sessions fell to the wayside. The next year, the school system adjusted by training grade-level chairs in each school to lead these weekly sessions, with APs serving as support & accountability. As a result of this improved structure, lesson planning flourished in 2022-23, and teacher instruction quickly improved.




Below is a list of development structures and practices that VDOE recommends all divisions put in place in 2024-25 to support understanding and implementation of HQIM and science-based reading instruction. An effective professional development plan—which is a requirement in the Division Literacy Plan—should include development & support structures like those outlined here along with trainings like those outlined in the table above.

*Recommended HQIM Development Structures & Practices*

| HQIM Development Structures, Roles, Practices, & Expectations | Details |
|---|---|
| **Establish division-wide literacy/HQIM priorities and accountability** | Superintendents must establish their literacy vision and HQIM implementation as major priorities for the division and ensure that stakeholders—particularly school leaders—are invested and held accountable for implementing these priorities at the school level. See case study here on the importance of building investment and establishing accountability across the division vertical spine. |
| **Establish division-level HQIM lead** | A single division-level leader of HQIM implementation (e.g. CAO, Literacy Director, etc.) should be responsible for monitoring implementation and trends, establishing priorities, determining strategy and supports, etc. This person must have the authority to establish next steps and accountability for stakeholders—including school leaders—or the superintendent must regularly do so on their behalf. This person will also be responsible for ensuring that all critical logistics are carried out, from delivering materials to buildings, to unboxing, to distributing materials to teachers, etc. |

| HQIM Development Structures, Roles, Practices, & Expectations | Details |
|---|---|
| **Establish school-level HQIM leads** | Schools must have a leader responsible for school-level HQIM implementation who has the authority to establish school-level priorities, strategy, supports, next steps, and accountability. The lead will attend division-level trainings and be responsible for turnkeying trainings and leading HQIM-based development at the school-level. This person will lead weekly grade-level HQIM-based lesson planning or be responsible for training and supporting those who do. |
| **Establish weekly grade-level Lesson Planning** | Lesson planning with HQIM requires that teachers move away from traditional planning (hunting for content, picking activities & texts, etc.) toward deeper internalization of HQIM content. These sessions, led by a school administrator or teacher leader, should guide teachers in rich discussion of unit/lesson content: identifying key learning, critical questions & tasks, exemplar responses & evidence, and strategies for engaging all students in the key work and addressing likely misconceptions without reducing rigor. |
| **Establish Lesson Planning Leads** | As noted above, schools should establish clear leads responsible for leading weekly lesson planning sessions for each grade. Can be a single lead (e.g. AP or Coach) or a shared responsibility amongst multiple individuals (e.g. AP and Coach, grade-level chairs) but should be clear and consistent. |
| **Establish HQIM-based walk throughs, coaching, and feedback** | Because HQIM are designed with a systematic and coherent scope & sequence, those walking through classrooms must seek to understand whether instructors are reaching the intentions of their materials. Therefore, it should be established as a division-wide expectation that all walk throughs be conducted alongside lesson materials and that teachers receive frequent coaching and feedback about their use of HQIM. |
| **Set clear HQIM expectations** | Related to the above, divisions and schools should set expectations that HQIM be used with consistency and integrity and that any outside materials that may distract from HQIM unit/lesson design should not be used. For instance, sites like Teachers Pay Teachers offer resources that are based on popular HQIM, but these resources often contain key differences that dilute the intentions of the materials. During walk throughs, leaders should note when outside materials start to dominate over the HQIM. Lessons should be grounded in the HQIM provided by the school division. |

| HQIM Development Structures, Roles, Practices, & Expectations | Details |
|---|---|
| **Utilize Reading Specialists to provide just-in-time interventions** | The Virginia Literacy Act requires Reading Specialists to coordinate and oversee intervention for students not meeting literacy benchmarks. Schools should utilize these positions to carefully monitor student progress, identify students' specific needs, and provide accelerated learning using just-in-time supports to ensure students are prepared for Tier I instruction. |
| **Monitor school- and division-level HQIM & literacy trends** | As teachers begin to implement new HQIM and work toward the division's literacy vision, division leaders must monitor division-level trends to adjust strategy and supports by completing walk throughs. Similarly, school leaders must monitor school-level trends and adjust supports. To facilitate this, divisions will need walk through observation systems to track data and look at trends. |
| **Norm all school leaders on effective literacy instruction and use of HQIM** | As division leaders walk through classrooms across buildings to monitor for trends, they should use classroom walkthroughs to norm with stakeholders like school leaders and coaches on the literacy vision and expectations for curriculum usage, monitoring, and support. By walking through and discussing instruction together, divisions can deepen stakeholder understanding of what instruction and HQIM use should look like. |
| **Establish regular stepbacks to review trends, determine priorities, and provide supports** | After monitoring for trends, division- and school-leaders must step back to review any identified trends, determine new priorities/strategy, and provide necessary supports. |
| **Celebrate HQIM successes** | Both division- and school leaders should plan to regularly celebrate HQIM successes to build and maintain investment. Consider leading off meetings and trainings with shoutouts and positive examples & feedback, noting successes in email blasts and newsletters, etc. |

### Develop Teacher & Leader Training Plan

Though regular development structures like HQIM-based lesson planning cycles and HQIM-based walk throughs & feedback cycles should form the base of educator development in HQIM, division literacy visions/goals, and science-based reading instruction, trainings are still key vehicles for introducing & communicating critical literacy concepts and expectations.

Implementing the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) will require training in knowledge building of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research. This knowledge building training for teachers, reading specialists, special educators, ESL teachers, and building administrators will not

only ensure educators understand the pedagogy around evidence-based reading research, but will also support the understanding of and effective use of high-quality instructional materials and practices. This training in evidence-based literacy instruction is required by the VLA.

School divisions should also plan for support in the implementation of HQIM that has been adopted. Therefore, the VLA required curriculum materials should be part of the division literacy plan as educators will be interacting with the newly adopted high-quality instructional materials in combination with pedagogical practices. When planning for curriculum based HQIM implementation support, school divisions should consider who should be included in this training. Training in high quality instructional materials should extend beyond the core content area teachers to include ELL teachers, gifted teachers, and special education teachers.

### *Recommended Trainings for Year 1 of HQIM Implementation*

As part of the Virginia Literacy Act, educators across the state are engaging in professional learning on evidence-based reading research. As provided in VDOE's guidance, divisions should continue to assess teacher knowledge and learning needs around evidence-based literacy and seek out strategic opportunities for ongoing learning. Below is an example of a scope of learning that reflects potential options that division might take based on the specific learning needs of their teachers and the learning that has already occurred. Note that trainings below can be combined in some cases and can be provided through a mixture of forums (e.g. at division-level vs. at the school-level). Divisions may create these trainings themselves or partner with external providers.

### *Trainings for Teachers and Leaders:*

**Phase I Trainings:**

**Introduction** to the reading research, adopted HQIM, and division literacy vision & goals
(Delivery: Summer and through the e 2024-25 School Year)

| Trainings | Training Details | Additional Info |
|---|---|---|
| **Science-based reading research** | Overview of the science-based reading research and evidence-based instructional practices | **Target audience:** All teachers using the materials; all school administration<br>**Resources:** Professional Learning from Virginia Literacy Partnerships |
| **Introduction to the division literacy vision, priorities and goals.** | What is the division's vision for effective literacy instruction and how does it align to the science-based reading research? Include examples and videos of effective and ineffective practice and set expectations for instruction aligned to the vision across classrooms. What are the division's literacy priorities and goals for 2024-25, and what strategies will be put in place to reach those goals? | **Target audience:** All teachers using the materials; all school administration<br><br>**Timing:** Spring 2024, 2024-25 School Year |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Introduction to new materials** | Overview of the new high-quality instructional materials including their design, alignment to the science-based reading research & division literacy vision, frequently used routines, opportunities to practice and become familiar with new materials, expectations for usage, and overview of ongoing support and development | **Target audience:** All teachers using the materials; all school administration<br><br>**Timing:** Opening of 2024-25 School Year<br><br>**Resources**: Example trainings here and here |

### Phase II Trainings:

**Creating Effective literacy practices grounded in HQIM**

(Target Delivery: 2024-25 School Year)

| Trainings | Training Details | Additional Info |
|---|---|---|
| **Effective foundational skills instruction (and the new materials)** | What are the key components of effective foundational skills instruction and how do the materials support those components?<br>• Systematic instruction<br>• Explicit instruction<br>• Student practice<br>• Assessment and mastery<br>Training should include practice and planning opportunities. | **Target audience:** All K-2 teachers using the materials, all school administration<br><br>**Timing:** 2024-25 School Year |
| **Effective reading comprehension instruction (and the new materials)** | What are the key components of effective reading comprehension instruction and how do the materials support those components?<br>• High-quality text & knowledge building<br>• Meaning-focused instruction<br>• Student ownership<br>Training should include practice and planning opportunities. | **Target audience:** All teachers using the materials, all school administration<br>**Timing:** 2024-25 School Year |
| **HQIM-based lesson planning** | Adopting HQIM means that teachers no longer need to spend time hunting for good content. Instead, they should repurpose that time to deeply prepare for instruction: internalizing their materials; identifying the most critical learning, questions, & tasks; determining exemplar responses; and planning for how to deeply engage students in the key learning to arrive at desired outcomes. | **Target audience:** All teachers using the materials, all school administration<br><br>**Resources:** Sample HQIM-based lesson planning protocols here; sample videos here |

*Trainings for Leaders and Coaches*

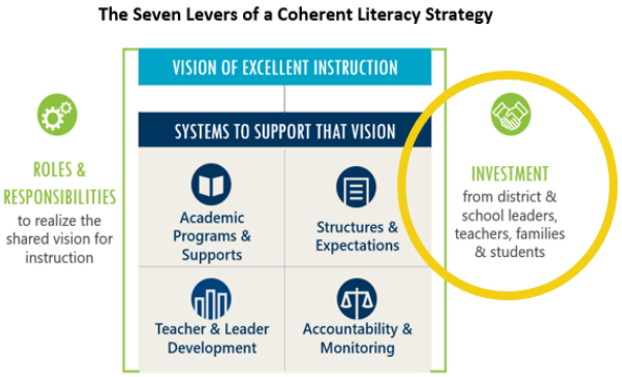
| HQIM Trainings | Training Details | Additional Info |
|---|---|---|
| **Supporting HQIM-based lesson planning** | HQIM-based lesson planning is generally most effective when guided as a grade-level discussion and it should serve as a model for how teachers should plan independently throughout the week. Those who will be tasked with leading these ongoing planning conversations (principals, APs, coaches, grade-level chairs) must receive training and support to do this well. | **Timing:** During regular weekly lesson planning schedules |
| **Early fall HQIM & literacy trends** | After walking through teachers' instruction and use of HQIM for the first 8-10 weeks of the fall semester, clear trends should begin to emerge. Use this time to celebrate successes and address any initial trends or challenges that have emerged. | **Timing:** October/November |
| **Spring 2025 Literacy Priorities** | Using key literacy/HQIM trends tracked during fall 2024, identify literacy/HQIM priorities for spring 2025 and provide training around any identified trends & priorities. | **Timing:** January 2025 |
| **Early spring HQIM & literacy trends** | After setting spring priorities and walking through teachers' instruction & use of HQIM for the first 6-8 weeks of the spring semester, clear trends should begin to emerge. Use this time to celebrate successes and address any trends or challenges that have emerged. | **Timing:** Feb/March |

## Resources

- Professional learning resources for science-based reading, from the Virgina Literacy Partnerships
- HQIM-based lesson planning resources:
    - Sample HQIM-based lesson planning protocols
    - HQIM-based lesson planning videos
- Case study on the importance of having clear roles & responsibilities across the vertical spine of the division in HQIM implementation

# **Chapter 8:** Establishing Accountability & Progress Monitoring, and Continually Adjusting Strategy

The final piece of a strong literacy strategy involves creating systems & practices to establish accountability, monitor progress, and adjust strategy as new needs arise. When divisions fail to put these things in place, they rarely advance toward their academic goals, even if the rest of their literacy strategy is sound.




## Key Steps to Establishing Accountability & Progress Monitoring, and Continually Adjusting Strategy

**a.** Establish Priorities and Accountability for Implementation
**b.** Supporting Implementation
**c.** Monitor Trends and Adjust Strategy to Deepen Impact

### Establish Priorities and Accountability for Implementation

Divisions will not achieve their literacy goals unless they set clear literacy priorities for stakeholders across the vertical spine and hold stakeholders accountable for achieving them. Because developing science-based reading instruction requires stakeholders at all levels—from division leadership to school leadership to instructional coaches and teachers—to work together, superintendents must take an active role in establishing priorities and accountability.

Superintendents should clearly establish the vision, goals, and priorities for their literacy & HQIM work, and identify & empower a division-level academic leader to direct that work, such as a Chief Academic Officer, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, or Literacy Director. This leader must be given the authority to establish widespread priorities and accountability alongside the superintendent. For instance, in structures in which school leaders answer directly to the superintendent, the superintendent must support their appointed academic leader hold school leaders accountable for implementation of the literacy HQIM work. And much as division leaders must hold school leaders accountable for implementation, school leaders must also establish priorities at the school level and hold teachers and staff accountable for achieving them. Unless all stakeholders across the spine of the division are given clear roles and directives in achieving a division's literacy and HQIM priorities, and consistently held accountable for achieving them, divisions should not expect to make significant progress or see student learning gains from their newly adopted curriculum. For further details, please see the expected roles & responsibilities chart in Chapter 5.

## Supporting Implementation

### *Central Office*

The superintendent must not only establish the division's literacy priorities, but create structures that support implementation of new materials and flag challenges in the implementation process. This will communicate to stakeholders that they are held responsible for this important work. As the superintendent or elementary instructional supervisor, one should walk through classrooms instruction to better understand how teachers are implementing instructional materials and what overall supports may be necessary to support different elementary schools. Getting into schools and classrooms to support implementation shows the importance of literacy and how much the team wants to support educators in the implementation of the division's literacy vision. It also provides support for school leaders and reading specialists in their work at the school level.

### *School Leaders*

To support implementation well, school leaders and reading specialists provide a vital role in supporting teachers in implementing high-quality instructional materials. School leaders and reading specialists should be involved in the lesson planning cycle. This includes support during lesson planning that is grounded in HQIM, lesson walk throughs, and informal feedback conversations. It is essential that teachers feel supported by both the reading specialist and the school leader. While both leaders cannot be present in all lesson planning or walk through occurrences, it is important to protect time for school leaders and reading specialists in providing consistent instructional leadership and support to HQIM implementation.

## Monitor Trends and Adjust Strategy to Deepen Impact

With good walk throughs and lesson planning information, schools will be able to adjust processes and add support as needed. As division and school leaders work to meet their literacy vision and their literacy goals, the instructional leadership team should meet and regularly discuss what they are seeing in lesson planning sessions and in walk through sessions. The team should also norm on types of feedback and who delivers feedback after walk through sessions. It is important that teachers feel valued and receive positive and constructive informal feedback when leaders visit their classroom.

Early in the fall of year one of HQIM implementation, divisions should discuss trends around HQIM lesson planning progress and HQIM usage in lesson walk throughs. As the team sees gaps in planning or usage, the district and school teams should provide additional supports to support implementation. As grade levels and schools demonstrate consistent lessons grounded in HQIM, the team may want to consider training and norming on the state's Instructional Practice Guide tool (to be released in April 2024). This tool will help school divisions refine walk through practices to look for specific strategies in implementing HQIM.

The Department recommends norming and supported walk throughs to occur during the fall and recommends transitioning to regular walk throughs using a tool in late fall to winter. During 2025,

school divisions should consider tracking walk through dates to better understand when teacher implementation is going well, how to identify and share bright spots as well as how to lean and provide stronger supports for classrooms and schools.

Data tracking to determine student improvements should begin during spring of 2025. It is important to give time to the implementation and support for teachers as the school division shifts classroom expectations. As the Department understands each school division is in a unique place, school divisions should determine specific transitions from norming on walk throughs, to tracking walk throughs to tracking student performance at different times. District leadership teams should customize these implementation progress monitoring strategies to meet the varying needs of school divisions across the Commonwealth. A Model Phases of Literacy Improvement table in Appendix A outlines the general phases that a division will pass through (and the steps key stakeholders will need to take) to refine and deepen their HQIM implementation.

The table below includes a sample implementation monitoring schedule that should provide a sense of how often divisions should review progress and identify new trends, priorities, and strategies. Divisions can use such a schedule in the progress monitoring section of their required Division Literacy Plan.

**Sample Monitoring and Adjustment Schedule (2024-25)**

| Time | Monitor |
|---|---|
| Ongoing Training | Communicate literacy vision, priorities, goals, and expectations across all stakeholders. Emphasize at both the division and school-levels. *As new teachers are hired, supports should be included in onboarding training.* |
| Fall (monthly) | School leaders and reading specialists walk through instruction in a sample of classrooms on a weekly basis to look for progress in implementation. |
| November *(Suggested)* | Shift to using a tool to norm walk throughs, ensure all classrooms have walk through opportunities, and all walk throughs provide consistent informal feedback. |
| December *(Suggested)* | Begin to use tools to track trends in implementation to establish needs, supports, and adjustments. Communicate expectations, supports, and adjustments to school leaders, teachers, and other key stakeholders. |
| Spring *(Suggested)* | District leadership should schedule time to consistently walk through instruction in all elementary schools to support school leaders and reading specialists, develop strategic supports as well as to identify bright spots to share across the school division.<br>Reading specialists across school divisions should start to share trend data, bright spots, and walk through with colleagues to continue to adjust support needs. |
| April 2025 *(Suggested)* | In addition to beginning to collect walk through data to determine strengths and needs. Begin to gather student work samples to see if teacher implementation is changing student learning experiences. Student work should be collected from bright spot classrooms during this early phase of implementation. |

| Time | Monitor |
|---|---|
| May 2025<br>*(Suggested)* | Based on analyzed data and trends, establish priorities for revising division literacy plans for biennial implementation. Develop or refine strategy, supports, and development for spring based on walk through data, student work samples, and performance data. Communicate new priorities/strategy to school leaders and other key stakeholders. |

## Resources

- The VA Instructional Practice Guide (coming April 2024) is a walk through tool aligned to the reading science.
- The Concerns-Based Adoption Model, from the UT Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, outlines the phases that divisions will likely pass through as they implement HQIM and begin to deeper their practice and understanding. Divisions should use this to help them move teachers from rote use of materials to a deeper practice that focuses on a deeper understanding of the materials and what students need to reach grade-level objectives. The Phases of Improvement chart from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model can be found in Appendix A of this document.

# Closing

VDOE looks forward to continuing to support and partner with school divisions as they embark on this long-term HQIM-based literacy strategy. This is no small task, but it is the work we must do to ensure that *all* students across Virginia develop into proficient readers and have the necessary skills to achieve their loftiest goals. The aim of this playbook is to help divisions personalize their own implementation strategy for how to take on this important work and achieve the student learning gains that are possible with HQIM when implemented as part of an overarching strategy.

Effective HQIM implementation is a long-term approach to supporting teachers and ensuring every child has a high-quality learning experience, every day. The department looks forward to working shoulder to shoulder with divisions across the Commonwealth as we focus on improving literacy instruction. Together, with HQIM, strong teachers, and clear and consistent support, each of us can ensure that every student in Virginia can demonstrate strong literacy skills by third grade.

# Appendix

The following appendix includes additional resources, examples, and recommendations to support divisions in developing their Division Literacy Plan and HQIM-based literacy strategy.

**Appendix A**: Phases of Literacy Improvement with HQIM
**Appendix B**: Timeline for HQIM Adoption & Implementation

## **Appendix A:** Phases of Literacy Improvement with HQIM

This table outlines the phases that divisions will pass through as they deepen and refine their HQIM practice. It is derived from the Levels of Use in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model from the University of Texas's Research and Development Center for Teacher Education.

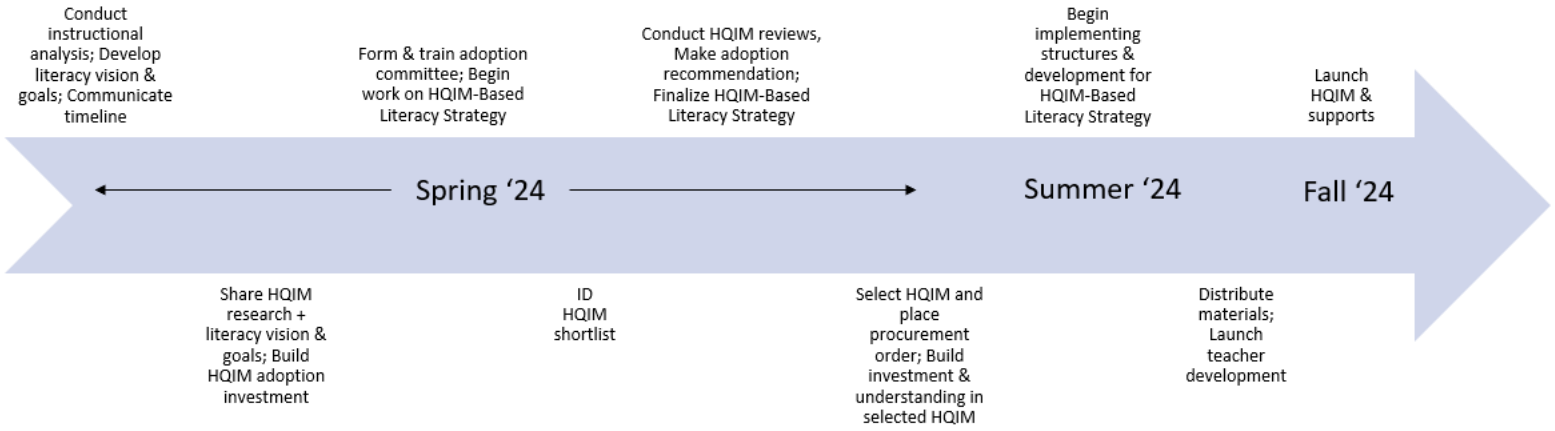
| **PHASE 1**<br>**Goal:** Move from "Mechanical Use" of HQIM to "Routine Use" of HQIM (i.e., implement the curriculum as written, building understanding and trust in the process). | **PHASE 2**<br>**Goal:** Move from "Routine Use" of HQIM to "Refinement" of HQIM (i.e., make strategic decisions about implementation to maximize impact on student learning). | **PHASE 3**<br>**Goal:** Move from "Refinement" of HQIM to "Integration" of HQIM (i.e., become experts in the implementation and help others maximize their impact on student learning). |
|---|---|---|
| **Division Leaders**<br>• Build and communicate shared vision for excellent ELA instruction and how new ELA materials support that vision.<br>• Set goals for changes in practice, student learning, and teacher/leader perceptions and articulate a strategy to achieve these goals.<br>• Monitor progress at key benchmarks to identify priorities for improvement and surface barriers to excellent instruction.<br>• Work to achieve coherence across all strategic initiatives and priorities designed to improve literacy instruction (examples: school schedules, teacher evaluation practices, grading practices and report cards).<br>• Regularly solicit feedback on the supports and resources provided to educators and the impact on families and students; Identify and share division/network bright spots.<br>• Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to leaders (*see below*) and teachers (*see below).*<br>• Establish authentic family engagement in literacy improvement work as a priority. | **Division Leaders**<br>• Set goals for changes in practice, student learning, and teacher/leader perceptions and articulate a strategy to achieve these goals.<br>• Monitor progress at key benchmarks to identify priorities for improvement and surface barriers to excellent instruction.<br>• Tier schools for differentiated support based on implementation trends.<br>• Work to achieve coherence across all strategic initiatives and priorities designed to improve literacy instruction (examples: division assessment strategy, push-in supports for ELL students, push-in supports for students with disabilities).<br>• Regularly solicit feedback on the supports and resources provided to educators and the impact on families and students; Identify and share division/network bright spots.<br>• Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to leaders (*see below*) and teachers (*see below).*<br>• Support school leaders/ teachers to engage families in supporting their students' learning. | **Division Leaders**<br>• Set goals for changes in practice, student learning, and teacher/leader perceptions and articulate a strategy to achieve these goals.<br>• Monitor progress at key benchmarks to identify priorities for improvement and surface barriers to excellent instruction.<br>• Tier schools for differentiated support based on implementation trends.<br>• Work to achieve coherence across all strategic initiatives and priorities designed to improve literacy instruction (examples: RTI curriculum and practices, ESL curriculum and practices).<br>• Regularly solicit feedback on the supports and resources provided to educators and the impact on families and students; Identify and share division/network bright spots.<br>• Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to leaders (*see below*) and teachers (*see below).*<br>• Support school leaders/ teachers to engage families in supporting their students' learning. |

| PHASE 1<br>**Goal:** Move from "Mechanical Use" of HQIM to "Routine Use" of HQIM (i.e., implement the curriculum as written, building understanding and trust in the process). | PHASE 2<br>**Goal:** Move from "Routine Use" of HQIM to "Refinement" of HQIM (i.e., make strategic decisions about implementation to maximize impact on student learning). | PHASE 3<br>**Goal:** Move from "Refinement" of HQIM to "Integration" of HQIM (i.e., become experts in the implementation and help others maximize their impact on student learning). |
|---|---|---|
| **School Leaders**<br>• Engage in professional learning to norm on the division vision for excellent implementation; build shared expectations for excellence.<br>• Provide regular feedback to teachers that is grounded in the vision for excellence and focused on data-informed priorities.<br>• Establish structured time, regular routines and consistent protocols for collaborative Unit Preparation.<br>• Establish structured time, regular routines, and consistent protocols for collaborative Lesson Preparation.<br>• Establish authentic family engagement in literacy improvement work as a schoolwide priority; provide time & resources to support. | **School Leaders**<br>• Engage in professional learning to refine targeted feedback to ELA teachers.<br>• Provide regular feedback to teachers that is grounded in the vision for excellence and focused on data-informed priorities.<br>• Monitor and improve Unit and Lesson preparation routines.<br>• Establish structured time, regular routines and consistent protocols for Unit Reflection (i.e., assessment data analysis).<br>• Establish structured time, regular routines, and consistent protocols for Lesson Reflection (i.e., student work analysis).<br>• Support teachers to engage families in supporting their students' learning. | **School Leaders**<br>• Engage in professional learning to refine targeted feedback to ELA, ESL and SPED teachers.<br>• Provide weekly feedback to teachers that is grounded in the vision for excellence and focused on data-informed priorities.<br>• Monitor and improve Unit and Lesson preparation and reflection routines.<br>• Establish structured time, regular routines and consistent protocols for ESL, RTI, and ELA teachers to collaboratively prepare targeted supports for students with diverse needs.<br>• Support teachers to engage families in supporting their students' learning. |

| PHASE 1<br>**Goal:** Move from "Mechanical Use" of HQIM to "Routine Use" of HQIM (i.e., implement the curriculum as written, building understanding and trust in the process). | PHASE 2<br>**Goal:** Move from "Routine Use" of HQIM to "Refinement" of HQIM (i.e., make strategic decisions about implementation to maximize impact on student learning). | PHASE 3<br>**Goal:** Move from "Refinement" of HQIM to "Integration" of HQIM (i.e., become experts in the implementation and help others maximize their impact on student learning). |
|---|---|---|
| **Coaches/ Teachers**<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative *preparation* for all Units and Lessons.<br>• Engage in professional learning to:<br>• Deepen understanding of how students acquire the language comprehension competencies (knowledge, vocab, syntax, etc.) needed to become proficient readers.<br>• Build understanding of how their new instructional materials are designed to support acquisition of these competencies.<br>• Practice key instructional routines in the curriculum that support student mastery of these competencies (e.g., close reading/read-aloud, protocols for discourse, etc.)<br>• Build skills and mindsets needed to shift from traditional lesson planning (i.e. gathering content) to deep HQIM-based preparation, grounded in backwards design.<br>• Utilize curriculum-embedded resources to engage families in supporting their students' learning (examples: information about what students should be learning in a given grade-level, key features of the curriculum and how it supports literacy development, how families can get involved to support learning). | **Coaches/ Teachers**<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative *preparation* for all HQIM Units and Lessons.<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative *reflection* on all HQIM Units and Lessons.<br>• Engage in professional learning to:<br>• Deepen understanding of how the assessment resources and tools in their instructional materials can be used to support student mastery of foundational skills.<br>• Practice key instructional routines in the curriculum that support student mastery of these skills.<br>• Build skills and mindsets needed to shift assessment and reflection practices.<br>• Refine efforts to engage families in supporting their students' learning. | **Coaches/ Teachers**<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative *preparation* for all HQIM Units and Lessons.<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative *reflection* on all HQIM Units and Lessons.<br>• Engage in structured, collaborative planning with ESL and RTI teachers to meet students' diverse needs.<br>• Engage in professional learning to:<br>• Deepen understanding of the supports for special education students, English language learners, and struggling students inherent in the curriculum.<br>• Deepen understanding of the specific scaffolding suggestions for meeting the needs of groups of or individual students in the curriculum.<br>• Build the skills and mindsets needed to collaboratively prepare strategic and targeted scaffolds for students' diverse needs.<br>• Coordinate with other teachers (ESL/RTI) to integrate efforts to engage families in supporting their students' learning. |

## **Appendix B:** Timeline for HQIM Adoption & Implementation

New curriculum adoption is a significant undertaking and divisions should plan to begin this work immediately in early 2024. It is particularly important that divisions give themselves enough time to engage key stakeholders in the process to build their investment and to ensure that teachers & leaders have a strong understanding of the materials before they begin implementation. This timeline provides an overview of the full HQIM adoption & implementation process for successfully adopting and launching HQIM.




### Winter/Spring 2024

- Conduct an analysis of current instructional practices by walking through classrooms to identify how often current lessons/assignments meet the demands of the science-based reading research and the division literacy vision. This can build the case for why adoption is necessary and provide baseline data to set goals and measure progress with HQIM implementation.
- Develop a vision for excellent literacy instruction aligned to the science-based reading research. The vision should quickly and clearly communicate to stakeholders what literacy instruction should look like across classrooms and build the case for HQIM adoption.
- Communicate curriculum adoption timeline/process with all stakeholders (teachers, leaders, families, board members, students, etc.).

## Early/Mid Spring 2024

- Share the available HQIM- and science-based reading research, along with results from your instructional state analysis, division literacy vision, goals, and priorities. Share that a broader strategy and plan for achieving the vision and goals will be shared later in the spring.
- Form curriculum adoption committee consisting of key stakeholders, including teachers
- Identify curriculum non-negotiables & selection criteria. Begin training adoption committee members on the HQIM selection process & criteria
- Conduct surveys and focus groups of broader stakeholder groups to determine what they value and want in a new curriculum.
- Identify shortlist of curriculum for adoption committee to review
- Begin work on Division Literacy Plan, outlining an HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy including plans for building investment in the vision, HQIM, and literacy strategy; identifying clear roles & responsibilities for all key stakeholders across the vertical spine of the division; plans to promote instructional coherence across the tiers of instruction and other student supports; HQIM-based support structures and development plans; and structures for monitoring and accountability
- Share stakeholder survey & focus group results with adoption committee
- Conduct finalist HQIM reviews
- Make curriculum adoption recommendation/s
- Share final adoption recommendation/s with broader community for final stakeholder feedback
- Finalize HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy

## Late Spring 2024

- Make official adoption decision and communicate decision to stakeholders (along with the rationale and process that went into the decision)
- Place procurement order
- Begin rollout of HQIM-Based Literacy Strategy: Start building investment in and understanding of the new materials among key stakeholders (e.g. share how new HQIM align to the science-based reading research), share literacy strategy and support/development plan, set clear expectations around curriculum usage and monitoring, etc.

## Late Spring/Early Summer 2024

- Begin developing school leaders in their roles for HQIM implementation, investment building, support, and accountability. If they need to put in place systems/structures to support HQIM implementation (e.g. weekly HQIM-based lesson planning sessions, grade-level planning leads, etc.) have them begin planning for those structures now.

- Finalize and submit Division Literacy Plan

## Summer 2024

- Distribute and unbox materials
- Implement HQIM during summer school, if possible, to begin building understanding and expertise
- Share new curriculum with all teachers and encourage them to begin familiarizing themselves with the new materials that they will be expected to use for the upcoming school year
- Ensure progress monitoring systems/tools are developed and in place

## In-service 2024

- Provide significant HQIM-based training and development to teachers as outlined in HQIM-based Literacy Strategy
- Re-share with teachers the division literacy vision, priorities, and goals. Share how HQIM will support that vision/goals. Share curriculum usage expectations and HQIM support/development plan
- Train & develop any support staff in their HQIM roles & responsibilities (e.g. instructional coaches, APs, grade-level chairs, etc.)

## Early Fall 2024

- Launch all development and support structures outlined in HQIM-based Literacy Strategy
- Begin monitoring and tracking implementation and progress toward priorities/goals, adjusting strategy as needed