# Appendices for the New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials

Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery

New Jersey Department of Education

**Note**: In the *New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials* PDF, Appendices A through C.2 were provided as samples. This document provides the editable versions of Appendices A through C.2

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## Appendix A—HQIM Rubric

This rubric is designed to ensure that selected instructional materials are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLS-ELA) and reflect evidence-based instructional practices that support the diverse needs of all students. The rubric has been adapted from the NJTSS Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool.

The rubric must be used sequentially to evaluate one instructional program at a time.

* Begin with Criterion 1 to determine whether the materials meet the expectations for alignment to research-based literacy instruction.
* Only if materials meet the expectations in Criterion 1 should reviewers proceed to Criterion 2, which evaluates inclusivity, accessibility, and local relevance.

This process ensures that all materials considered for adoption are grounded in high-quality, research-based literacy practices before assessing their suitability for diverse learners and specific district needs.

As educators work to evaluate HQIM, read each element and determine the level at which the materials address the element at each grade level. Be sure to include any clarifying notes.

**Scale:**

* 3: Almost Always
* 2: Sometimes
* 1: Seldom
* 0: Not Evident

### Criterion 1: Assess Whether Students’ Needs are Met and Analyze Evidence of HQIM’s Alignment to Research-Based Practices

Dimension 1: Assessment of Student Needs

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Universal screening data analyzed at classroom, grade, school, and district levels to determine to what degree instruction is meeting students’ needs in key areas |  |  |  |  |  |

Dimension 2: External Materials Review

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Satisfies relevant criteria of district’s selected external review |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. When external review is unavailable, rigorous review has confirmed alignment to research-based practices in key areas (e.g., [NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E2FcfucHDXE2M13yBiulyuEBVdmtO6c-KvpE3RbBAKo/copy)) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Emphasizes explicit, systematic phonics instruction and decodable texts |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Avoids practices unsupported by research |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Emphasizes knowledge building |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Avoids Basal Bloat |  |  |  |  |  |

7. Do the materials pass Criterion 1?

* Yes
* No

If materials pass, move to criterion 2.

### Criterion 2: Consider Suitability for Diverse Learners, Accessibility, and Local Context

**Note:** Many of the considerations for diverse learners would benefit all learners.

Dimension 1: Considerations for Students with Disabilities or Learning Difficulties

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Includes explicit instructional routines and resources for differentiating/scaffolding reading instruction with emphasis on targeted, foundational word recognition and language comprehension skills for small-group and/or individualized support |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Includes resources for providing accommodations and modifications (e.g., manipulatives, graphic organizers, audiobooks for grade level texts) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Provides ample opportunities for distributed skill practice and rereading texts (e.g., repeated practice, repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Provides decodable, controlled texts (including words with previously and recently taught sound-spelling patterns) of varied genres and topics for application of skills and extended repeated practice |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Includes assessments with explicit criteria to screen for potential reading problems and to monitor the progress of students who require small-group or individualized differentiated instruction |  |  |  |  |  |

6. Do the materials meet the needs of students with disabilities or learning difficulties?

* Yes
* No

Evidence:

**Note:** Examples are provided for Spanish speakers; however, the elements can be applied to support students who speak a variety of home languages.

Dimension 2: Considerations for Multilingual Learners

| **Elements** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Includes texts of varied genres and topics for providing reading instruction in students’ home language and in English including authentic texts in home language. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Uses knowledge of phonemes in students’ home language to support learning phonemes in English (e.g., discusses the features of sounds in English) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Uses knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences in students’ home language to support learning letters and letter-sound correspondences in English (e.g., analyzes *ñ* /ɲ/ as compared to *n* /n/, using target words from students’ home language) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Extends opportunities to incorporate word meanings into phonics and decoding instruction, leveraging visual representations or cognates (words whose spellings and meanings are similar across languages) whenever possible (e.g., incorporating a picture for the word *boat*, comparing the words *banco* and *bank*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Provides opportunities to analyze the commonalities and differences between punctuation in students’ home language and in English to support reading fluency (e.g., *¿Qué hora es?* in comparison to *What time is it?*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Provides ample opportunities to hear fluent and expressive reading in students’ home language and in English (e.g., interactive read-alouds, modeled and shared reading, etc.) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Provides ample opportunities to reread texts in students’ home language and in English (e.g., repeated reading, partner reading, choral reading, reader’s theater, etc.) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Uses vocabulary knowledge in students’ home language to support vocabulary development in English, leveraging cognates (words whose spellings and meanings are similar across languages) to create metalinguistic awareness whenever possible (e.g., *teléfono* vs *telephone*, *ir* vs *go*) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Provides opportunities to analyze the commonalities and differences between syntax in students’ home language and in English to support comprehension (e.g., adjective location, conjugation, etc) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10.Provides ample opportunities for using new vocabulary and language structures to make connections to concepts and students’ own lived experiences orally and in writing |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11.Includes assessments with explicit criteria to monitor the progress of multilingual learners who require small-group or individualized differentiated instruction |  |  |  |  |  |

12. Do the materials meet the needs of multilingual learners?

* Yes
* No

Evidence:

Dimension 3: Considerations for Gifted and Talented Learners

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Includes strategic instruction in analysis and interpretation of complex content and themes within appropriately advanced text |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Provides opportunities for flexible and collaborative shared reading/writing experiences with peers at a similar advanced level |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Includes above-grade-level, advanced texts of varied genres, topics, and characters for application of advanced skills |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Includes opportunities for inquiry and independent research, creative reading/writing tasks, and activities focused on more complex content and themes |  |  |  |  |  |

5. Do the materials meet the needs of gifted and talented learners?

* Yes
* No

Evidence:

Dimension 4: Considerations for Inclusive Materials

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Opportunities are provided for frequent student interaction with a variety of culturally and linguistically affirming connected texts |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. A variety of culturally affirming, sufficiently complex, knowledge-building text sets are used to develop students’ background knowledge in a variety of genres and content areas |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Text selections are diverse and culturally affirming, motivating, and of high-interest. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Includes content-rich lessons that explicitly and purposefully build on or connect to students’ cultural background knowledge to encourage deep processing and analytical thinking in students’ home language and in English |  |  |  |  |  |

5. Do the materials meet the needs for inclusivity?

* Yes
* No

Evidence:

Dimension 5: Considerations for Local Context

| **Element** | **K** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **Evidence** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. The materials fit within the district’s allotted instructional time without requiring significant modifications. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. The materials provide clear guidance and professional learning support that align with instructional needs, and the district’s schedule allows for the suggested amount of professional learning. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. The materials are compatible with the district’s technology resources, including devices, internet access, and learning platforms. |  |  |  |  |  |

4. Do the materials meet the needs of the local context?

* Yes
* No

Evidence:

### Additional Considerations

No single set of instructional materials will meet all student needs. Educators should focus on how adaptable materials are, rather than relying solely on their current form. It's important to balance the need for specialized support with the goal of inclusive education. When possible, prioritize materials that serve multiple special populations at once.

Effective use of high-quality instructional materials also depends on curriculum-based professional learning. Educators need ongoing, embedded, and collaborative learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of the materials, instructional strategies, and ways to adapt them for diverse learners. Aligning professional learning with the curriculum ensures materials are used effectively to support all students.

### Definitions

Explicit, Systematic Phonics Instruction and Decodable Texts

Strong foundational word recognition skills instruction follows a structured literacy approach to phonemic awareness, decoding, and word reading fluency. This requires the inclusion of explicit, systematic phonics instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Materials must provide a cumulative scope and sequence for skill introduction and structured lesson plans. With ample opportunities for students to read decodable texts while reinforcing phonics and spelling patterns previously taught, educators do not need to rely on leveled readers that may not fully support this important decoding skill development.

Knowledge-Building and Comprehension Strategies

Research indicates that knowledge is a critical driver of reading comprehension, so materials should integrate science, social studies, and other content-rich topics to support deep learning in a variety of increasingly complex texts (Cervetti, Barber, Dorph, Pearson, & Goldschmidt, 2012). Materials must be designed to systematically build students’ background knowledge, academic vocabulary, and exposure to complex language structures through rich, connected texts.

Misguided Practices

Effective materials exclude practices such as three-cueing, leveled-reading approaches for skill development, and other strategies that are not supported by research. Districts are advised to carefully examine whether materials are fully aligned with a structured literacy approach for all aspects of literacy instruction. Materials must include instructional routines that foster a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., *I do, we do, you do*) and do not include mixed-method approaches that can lead to confusion.

Basal Bloat

Many traditional comprehensive reading (i.e. basal) programs contain excessive ancillary materials that can overwhelm educators and dilute instructional foci. While these programs may technically align with standards, their lack of coherence and overabundance of resources make effective literacy instruction difficult to implement. It is recommended for districts to prioritize materials that emphasize coherent, high-impact resources rather than an overwhelming volume of disconnected components.

## Appendix B—HQIM Implementation Checklist

This HQIM Implementation Checklist is designed to guide district and school leaders through the three key phases of adopting and sustaining High-Quality Instructional Materials: Strategic Leadership & Readiness, Informed Selection & Launch, and Continuous Improvement & Sustainability. Grounded in evidence-based practices and aligned with the *New Jersey Literacy Framework* and *NJTSS-ER* , the checklist supports data-informed decision-making and instructional coherence. It serves as a practical tool to ensure that HQIM are implemented effectively, equitably, and with lasting impact on student outcomes.

### Phase 1: Strategic Leadership & Readiness

⬜ Establish a Leadership Team:

* Include district/school leaders, general/special education, bilingual/ESL staff, coaches, and community representatives.
* Define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority.

⬜ Assess District Readiness:

* Review universal screening data to determine effectiveness of current Tier 1 instruction.
* Use [NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Core Analysis Tool](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E2FcfucHDXE2M13yBiulyuEBVdmtO6c-KvpE3RbBAKo/copy) for a deeper review of current practices and materials.

⬜ Develop a Clear Instructional Vision:

* Align vision to research-based literacy practices and equity.
* Ensure the vision supports coherence across classrooms, grade levels, and schools.

⬜ Build Knowledge on HQIM:

* Train leadership team on evidence-based criteria for HQIM ((i.e., all team members take the [NJTSS-ER Tier 1 Online Learning Course](https://elearning.easygenerator.com/0d262ae4-1bff-43e5-9538-a6573811f7a0/#/)).
* Engage stakeholders in understanding the value and purpose of HQIM.

### Phase 2: Informed Selection & Implementation

⬜ Determine Need for New HQIM:

* Use data analysis to decide if existing materials need to be supplemented or replaced.
* Identify whether additional professional learning is needed for current HQIM.

⬜ Select HQIM:

* Engage vendors and analyze products using external reviews and the state-aligned rubric (Appendix A).
* Consider adaptability, support structures, and alignment with district context.

⬜ Pilot Materials:

* Test selected HQIM in a subset of schools or classrooms.
* Collect teacher and student feedback, assess alignment with instructional needs.
* Use student outcome data to inform final selection.

⬜ Plan Professional Learning:

* Develop training and coaching schedules for all instructional staff.
* Focus on HQIM navigation, instructional shifts, and data use.
* Embed learning in collaborative planning time (CPT) or PLCs.

⬜ Operationalize HQIM:

* Create grade-level instructional guidelines (materials, assessments, pacing).   
  See [NJTSS-ER Mapping Tier 1 Instructional Guidelines](https://rutgers.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/5.5+Mapping+Tier+1+Instructional+Guidelines/1_ss48k4cd).
* Define expectations for both whole and small group instruction.

⬜ Support Early Implementation:

* Train key personnel in instructional materials and data tools.
* Use early adopters as champions to build buy-in and peer support.

⬜ Monitor Fidelity:

* Conduct walkthroughs, teacher reflections, and student work reviews.
* Adjust support based on fidelity data and teacher feedback.

### Phase 3: Continuous Improvement & Sustainability

⬜ Analyze Student Outcomes:

* Analyze assessment data at district, school, and classroom levels.
* Identify areas needing instructional or pacing adjustments, supplemental resources, or additional PD.

⬜ Maintain Feedback Loops:

* Hold regular implementation meetings and check-ins.
* Use teacher feedback to guide improvements and adjustments.

⬜ Adapt and Expand Implementation:

* Revisit earlier phases when onboarding new staff or scaling HQIM to new schools/grades.
* Tailor expansion efforts based on school readiness and capacity.

⬜ Build a Culture of Continuous Learning:

* Celebrate progress and maintain focus on instructional integrity.
* Ensure sustainable structures for collaboration and reflection.

⬜ Ensure Sustainability:

* Align processes and practices with HQIM to promote equity and coherence.
* Embed HQIM into district systems for long-term impact and improvement.

## Appendix C.1—HQIM Family 2-pager

### Purpose

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to helping every child become a strong and confident reader and writer. In New Jersey, curriculum is defined as a district-provided instructional plan that outlines the knowledge, skills, and competencies students are expected to master, aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). School district curriculum includes pacing guides, assessments, interdisciplinary connections, and diverse resources to support learners at all levels (NJDOE, 2022). High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) serve as the foundation for the curriculum. This guide explains how schools choose High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) to support your child’s literacy development. These materials are carefully selected to ensure all students receive the best possible instruction in reading and writing.

### What Are High-Quality Instructional Materials?

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are reading and writing programs and tools that:

* Align with New Jersey’s academic standards
* Leverage strong research
* Help all students—including multilingual learners and students with disabilities—access grade-level content
* Support both classroom instruction and small group learning

These materials provide teachers with clear lesson plans, engaging texts, and helpful assessments so they can focus more on teaching and less on creating materials from scratch.

### Why It Matters

When schools use low-quality materials, students may experience confusion or gaps in learning. HQIM provide a consistent and strong foundation for learning, helping students:

* Build vocabulary and background knowledge.
* Practice phonics, decoding, fluency, and comprehension.
* Read and write about meaningful topics.
* Stay on track with their grade-level learning goals.
* Access rigorous and high-quality learning experiences, regardless of the classroom context.

Teachers also benefit from HQIM because they spend less time searching for materials and more time teaching and supporting your child.

### What Families Should Know

The materials used in your child’s classroom go through a careful selection process. School leaders and teachers:

* Review national evaluations to find programs that meet quality standards.
* Make sure materials meet the needs of all students in their community.
* Pilot programs before making a final choice.
* Provide professional learning for teachers to use the materials effectively.

### What You Can Expect

If your child’s school is using HQIM, you may notice:

* A consistent routine in reading and writing lessons
* Strong focus on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension
* Rich and diverse texts that reflect different cultures and perspectives
* Opportunities for your child to talk, read, and write about what they are learning

### How Families Can Stay Involved

Your child’s school may share more about the literacy materials through:

* Back-to-school nights
* School newsletters or websites
* Take-home letters and learning activities

Many HQIM also include family guides or tips for supporting learning at home.

If you want to learn more about how reading is taught or the materials being used, reach out to your child’s teacher or principal. You can also find resources on the NJDOE’s [Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](https://nj.gov/education/lear/) webpage and the [SPAN Parent Advocacy Network START](https://spanadvocacy.org/programs/start/njtss/) webpage to help support your child’s literacy journey.

Together, we can ensure that every child in New Jersey has access to high-quality, equitable literacy instruction that supports lifelong learning and success.

## Appendix C.2—HQIM Educator 2-pager

### Purpose

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to improving literacy outcomes through the use of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). This guide helps educators understand what HQIM are, why they matter, and how they can support effective and equitable literacy instruction aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

### What Are High-Quality Instructional Materials?

HQIM are standards-aligned, evidence-based instructional tools that support teachers in delivering coherent, rigorous, and inclusive literacy instruction. These materials provide structured guidance for instruction, support differentiation, and promote equity by ensuring every student has access to grade-level content.

### Why HQIM Matter

Research shows that coherent, well-structured literacy programs enhance instructional quality and student achievement. HQIM free teachers from hunting for or creating materials, enabling more time for thoughtful lesson planning and better alignment with state standards and individual student needs. Consistent, research-based instruction through HQIM creates equal learning opportunities for students across classrooms and schools.

### What HQIM Should Include

Effective HQIM for literacy include:

* Explicit, systematic phonics instruction and decodable texts
* Instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
* Integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks
* Culturally and linguistically inclusive content.
* Embedded formative assessments to guide instruction

### Selecting HQIM

Districts should use evidence-based criteria to evaluate materials, such as external reviews, the NJDOE HQIM rubric, and local data (e.g., universal screening results). The two-part HQIM rubric developed by NJDOE assesses both research alignment and responsiveness to diverse learners.

### Implementing HQIM in the Classroom

Effective HQIM implementation involves:

* Developing clear instructional guidelines and pacing expectations
* Providing ongoing, curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL)
* Facilitating teacher collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Collaborative Planning Time (CPT)
* Monitoring fidelity of use through observations and student work analysis
* Using data to adjust instruction and supports

### HQIM and Tiered Instruction

HQIM are central to Tier 1 instruction. When used consistently and effectively, they can reduce the need for intervention by ensuring most students succeed in core instruction. Intervention materials should align closely with Tier 1 HQIM to maintain coherence across support levels.

### Sustaining and Improving HQIM Use

Implementation is an ongoing process. Districts and schools should regularly review student data, gather teacher feedback, and revisit implementation strategies to ensure HQIM use remains effective, equitable, and aligned with student needs.

For additional guidance, training, and resources on HQIM implementation, visit the NJDOE’s [Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](https://nj.gov/education/lear/) webpage (nj.gov/education/lear).

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