



INSTRUCTION
PARTNERS

**WHAT DOES IT TAKE
TO IMPLEMENT A
STRONG CURRICULUM
EFFECTIVELY?**

PART 2: WHAT HAPPENS IN DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS
WHERE NEW INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS LEAD TO
GREATER STUDENT LEARNING?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our schools are full of children with amazing potential. As our schools become more diverse than ever before, we depend on our teachers to deliver creative and rigorous lessons that reach all students. But, getting kids excited about learning, especially when they all have different strengths and needs, is hard work, and too often we ask teachers to do it all on their own. Research shows that providing teachers with high-quality instructional materials to support their teaching is an effective strategy for increasing student learning. When teachers have great instructional materials, they can focus their time, energy, and creativity on meeting the diverse needs of students and helping them all learn and grow.

However, teachers need much more than a new box of materials. They need to be supported by a team of leaders who recognize that the process of introducing new instructional materials is a complex one. It demands knowledge of content and pedagogy, investment and communication across stakeholder groups, attention to detail, and a keen understanding of how curriculum connects to other pieces of a district's academic plan.

In our work with districts, we've seen the introduction of new materials energize teachers, spark innovative approaches to instruction, and lead to greater outcomes for students. We've also seen it create confusion and frustration as everyone struggles to figure out something new, without any increase in student learning. These mixed observations led us to wonder about how the way instructional materials get implemented affects the outcomes teachers and students experience. Moreover, it made us wonder which elements of the curriculum implementation process are most important and what doing them well – in a way that's truly supportive of teachers and students – looks like. To answer these questions, we launched an action research project that studied the curriculum implementation stories of districts across the country.

Our primary findings include:

- Districts face a **common set of challenges** when they implement new instructional materials. These challenges tend to be consistent across districts, regardless of their size and student demographics.
- Many of the struggles that come up during curriculum implementation **can be avoided** if districts learn from the lessons of others and proactively anticipate the kinds of challenges they're most likely to encounter.
- Teacher and leader knowledge of **content and standards** matters a lot, and knowledge of how to **lead and manage the process** of changing materials matters just as much.
- The difference between materials that support teachers in raising student achievement and those that don't is a **series of deliberate actions** that are driven by a shared vision of what great instruction looks like.

Based on these findings, we created a Curriculum Implementation Framework that maps out the critical steps involved in selecting, preparing for, and using new instructional materials. This framework is an attempt to collectively name and understand the challenges that come up around curriculum implementation and make it more likely for a curriculum to have the kind of impact teachers and leaders want. We are excited to share the framework in this white paper, along with a sample toolkit of practical resources aligned to one of the steps of the framework. We also share some reflections, based on our work with districts, on the important role an instructional vision and knowledge of standards play in the curriculum implementation process. This paper builds on our first curriculum white paper, published in December of last year, which presented trends in data from interviews with educators about their experiences with new materials.

We share our research and resources with you now because we believe that high-quality instructional materials can save teachers time, spark teacher innovation, boost rigor while meeting all students' needs, and increase learning. We believe these tools can help leaders, teachers, and community members work together to avoid common pitfalls and navigate the process of changing curriculum so that teachers have the support they need to inspire their students to learn and grow.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION SNAPSHOTS

Implementing new instructional materials is a complex process. The following vignettes, which tell the stories of real districts, highlight some of the challenges, pitfalls, and successes we've seen educators experience as they moved to new materials. Readers should know that these stories are about districts who work hard and want the best for their teachers and students. The reason we share these stories is not to point a finger at districts who don't get it right the first time, but rather to emphasize how many different factors districts have to think through when they introduce new materials.

DISTRICT A

District A selected a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. The curriculum prioritized reading, writing, and discussing thematically linked texts with well-designed supports for English learners. Teachers experienced robust training, reported liking the materials, and shifted their instruction to accommodate the curriculum's model, which included read-alouds, class discussions, collaborative writing activities, and independent reading. Principals were invited to the teacher training, but few could come. During classroom observations and evaluations, principals gave teachers feedback that conflicted with the curriculum's design. Principals were accustomed to a previous lesson model that focused on decodable readers and lots of time spent in guided reading groups, which many thought was the best approach for literacy instruction. Many principals also believed that English learners, especially those reading below grade level, should spend their time working on foundational skills like phonics and spelling. Teachers tried to integrate principals' feedback with the curriculum, which resulted in a blend of instructional approaches that didn't meet the goals of either approach and led to widespread frustration.

DISTRICT B

Leaders in District B were eager to give teachers strong materials. They looked at reports about the best materials, talked with other district leaders who had recently adopted new curricula, and chose a curriculum that was well regarded. As teachers started using the curriculum, they reported that its design didn't match their students' needs. Teachers began planning extra lessons to make sure students got practice on the skills they thought were important. Teachers complained to principals and students' parents that district leaders had excluded them from the curriculum selection process and they were now having to do more work.

DISTRICT C

Teachers and leaders in District C chose a math curriculum that emphasized open-ended tasks and facilitated math discussions. District leaders set the expectation that teachers use the curriculum as written, believing that following the curriculum's scope and sequence strictly was the best way to support success. Teachers initially stuck to the exact lesson design and pacing of the curriculum but felt forced to move on to new objectives even when students had yet to master previous ones. While many teachers liked the curriculum's inquiry-based approach, they felt they couldn't demonstrate skills when students struggled to discover concepts on their own. As state testing approached, many teachers started using their own lessons to review skills students had missed from the curriculum. When principals asked teachers how curriculum implementation was going, teachers shared that they "felt like robots". Principals, upset by what they were hearing from teachers, began calling on district leadership to change course.

DISTRICT D

District D, where the majority of students read below grade level, adopted a new ELA curriculum anchored in complex texts and analytical writing tasks. In an effort to meet their students at their current reading level, teachers adapted the materials. Teachers often read sections aloud or switched out texts for versions that students could read on their own more easily. If students struggled to answer questions, teachers frequently stepped in with a response or made up new questions, many of which asked students to recall information from the text rather than analyze it. At the end of the year, students' test scores showed no increase and teachers felt frustrated that they'd worked through the curriculum change without results. The principals and community knew how hard teachers were working and blamed the curriculum as the problem.

DISTRICT E

Teachers, leaders, and community members in District E knew that many of the students in their district didn't have opportunities to travel, visit museums, or participate in other cultural experiences that help build knowledge about the world. In response, they selected a new ELA curriculum that featured rich informational texts designed to build knowledge. Teachers and principals engaged in training experiences prior to launching the curriculum to fully understand the intention and design. They were joined by family members and students. Teachers and leaders supported one another during implementation by reading and discussing the texts together and planning lessons collaboratively. Leaders consulted the curriculum before providing lesson feedback to teachers. District E asked for feedback from many different groups throughout the process and continuously improved the ways they supported teachers and students. The first-year scores were flat but they stuck with it, knowing they had learned a lot, and during the second year students showed significant growth on state assessments.

BACKGROUND

We all want every student to find success in school. While there are many factors that shape students' achievement, the quality of the instructional materials they engage with plays a significant role in what and how much they learn (Polikoff & Koedel, 2017; Steiner, 2017). The introduction of quality instructional materials can yield more than half a year of additional learning for students (Kane et al., 2016) and can help make up the difference between novice teachers and their more experienced colleagues (Kane, 2016). Furthermore, while skilled teachers can benefit from access to better instructional materials, such materials have the greatest positive impact on students who have less effective teachers, a finding with important implications in a country where historically disadvantaged populations of students are more likely to be assigned weaker teachers (Cowan, Goldhaber, & Theobald, 2017; Jackson & Makarin, 2017).

Teachers, recognizing the importance of quality materials in the face of more rigorous standards, have widely sought out better resources to support their teaching (Opfer, Kaufman, & Thompson, 2016). Fortunately, as states have gone through curriculum adoption cycles, many have brought new scrutiny to the process. New organizations, such as EdReports, provide a lens into the quality of available materials. High quality open source materials – led by the publication of freely available materials on the EngageNY website also housed by UnboundEd – set a new bar and vision for what quality materials can look like. Multiple proprietary and open source options, reflecting a variety of pedagogies, are now available to schools and districts. While there were times when textbooks felt like a square peg in a round hole and minimally useful, educators now have some good choices.

But, ask any teacher, principal, or district instructional leader – introducing new curricula is challenging and complex work. The vignettes that opened this paper, which come from real districts, highlight the common challenges and implementation pitfalls that can derail the best of intentions.

District A – Teachers and principals have different ideas about what good instruction looks like, which leads to mixed messages about the curriculum

District B – Leaders are engaged in curriculum adoption, but teachers are left out

District C – Leaders and teachers are so strict in their fidelity to the curriculum they fail to meet students' needs, students struggle, and ultimately everyone rejects the materials

District D – Teachers' well-intended adaptations get out of hand and dilute the rigor of the materials

Moving to a new curriculum can feel like a house of cards – actions have to be carried out deliberately, or else the whole thing can collapse. Choosing the right materials requires deep knowledge of academic standards, the instructional shifts, and research about instruction, as well as a clear understanding of how different sets of materials will or won't meet the unique needs of students in a particular district. Next comes preparation and implementation, which demands a whole other set of skills related to leading and navigating change. Leaders have to set goals, make and follow through on plans, communicate with everyone, and attend to countless details, such as making sure the materials are shipped on time and feedback surveys get sent out. And, leaders have to do all of this in a way that incorporates the perspectives of others and keeps everyone on the same team. Moving to a new curriculum is a big lift with lots of moving pieces, and Districts A, B, C, and D remind us of how thorny the work can be.

However, districts are successful in this complicated work.

In District E, despite some challenges, teachers, leaders, and community members worked together to learn to use the materials, stayed the course, and saw tremendous results by year two.

We've seen districts manage all the parts of the curriculum selection and implementation process coherently, in service of a shared vision of what great teaching looks like and in partnership with all members of the district community.

Furthermore, we've seen curriculum implementation go well in a range of different districts – big and small, urban and rural, etc. – with varying amounts of resources. This shows that what makes the process work has little if anything to do with a district's size, budget, student population, or even which curriculum they use. In fact, we've seen two different districts with similar student demographics implement the same curriculum, and one district thrived while the other one struggled. Educators in both of these districts worked really hard and had great intentions, but only one of them did student achievement increase.

What is different, then, about the success stories? What happened in District E that didn't happen in the others?

Simply put, why do the same materials fly in some districts and flop in others? We started asking this question and learned quickly that most districts experience most of the same challenges. Perhaps more importantly, we learned that while nobody has all the answers, many of the challenges that come up when changing curricula can be avoided if we as an education community learn from each other's experiences very deliberately.

At [Instruction Partners](#), we work with school districts to support student learning through great instruction. We've worked with more than 170 schools across multiple states, many of whom look to curriculum as a key strategy to help teachers strengthen instruction and student learning. We've seen the struggle of implementing new materials first-hand but have also seen the successes and game-changing difference great materials can make. Helping districts share their promising practices and create a common tool that maps out the key moves behind successful curriculum implementation felt both solvable and impactful, so we set out to find and learn from districts' stories. We started by interviewing more than 50 school and system leaders who had recently switched to high-quality curriculum materials. We asked them what

worked, what was hard, and what they wished they had done differently (you can read more in detail about what we found [here](#)). We also conducted a review of available research on the topic of curriculum implementation. Next, we sat down with a group of leaders in the middle of selection and/or implementation and pooled their collective learning. We created a roadmap of key decisions and hot spots and then tested this roadmap with a number of districts to see what proved helpful. Finally, we shared our work with peer organizations and education policy leaders with a birds-eye view of the curriculum landscape to get their input.

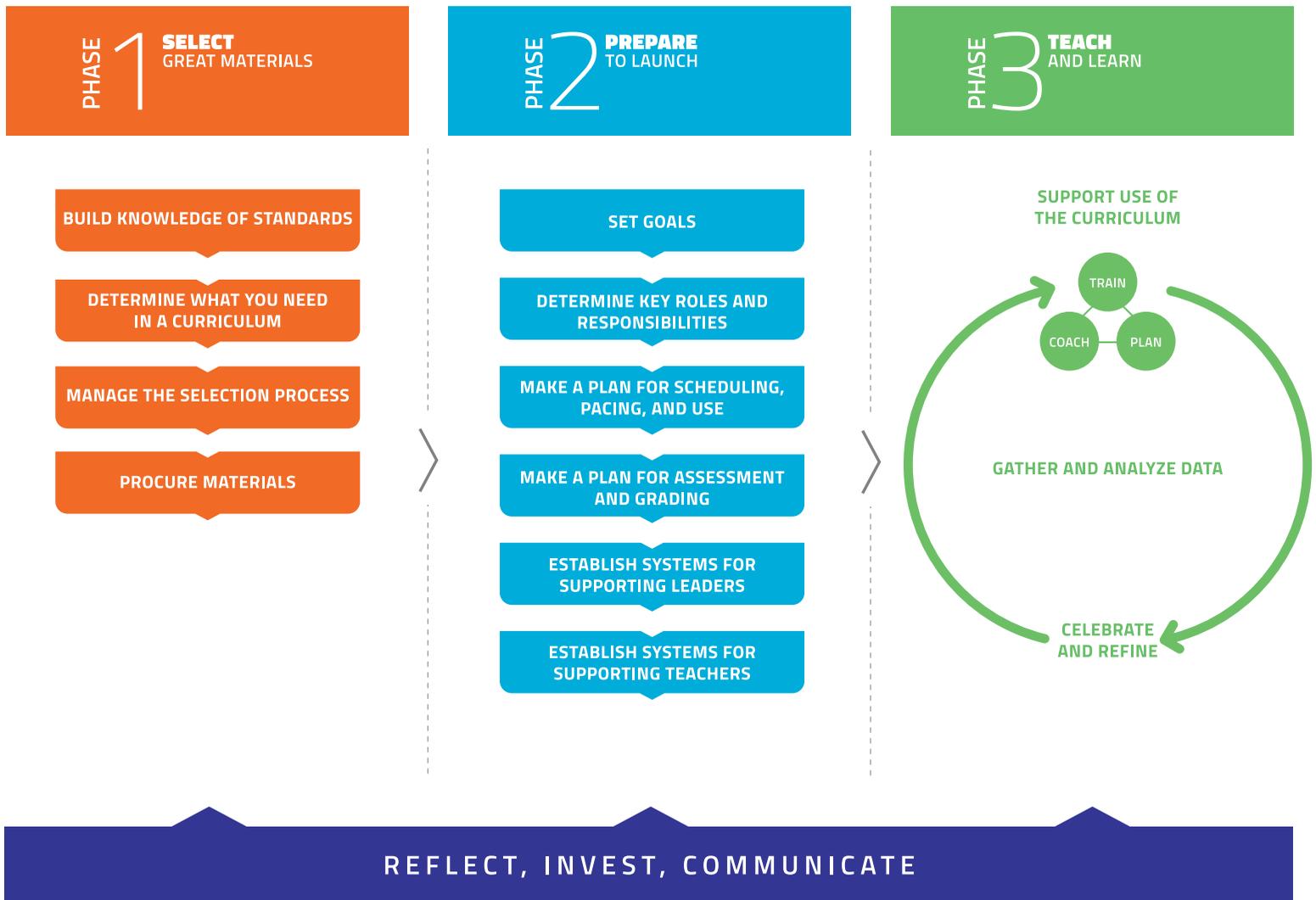


FRAMEWORK

What we ultimately found was that **the difference between materials flying and flopping is a series of replicable actions** that involve teachers, leaders, and community members. We organized these actions into a framework, a kind of mental model for thinking about the different pieces of the curriculum implementation process. The framework is designed to help leaders who are selecting and implementing curricula – whether they’re doing so because the calendar says it’s time for a new adoption cycle or because they’re actively seeking it out as a strategy for improvement – do it more effectively. The framework is an attempt to collectively name and understand the challenges that come up around curriculum implementation and make it more likely for a curriculum to have the impact on teaching and learning that educators want.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

INSTRUCTIONAL VISION



This framework is organized around three distinct phases: selecting great materials, preparing to launch materials, and teaching with the materials and learning how to use them well. Each phase is composed of a series of steps. For example, Phase 1 has four steps: build teacher and leader knowledge of standards, determine what you need in a curriculum, manage the selection process, and procure materials. Some steps in the framework involve more work than others, and some steps may need to be revisited as districts move through the process.

Four Steps:

- **Build knowledge of standards**
- **Determine what you need in a curriculum**
- **Manage the selection process**
- **Procure materials**

The goal of Phase 1 is to thoughtfully choose materials that align with state standards, support educators' vision of what great teaching looks like, and meet the diverse needs of students, and to go about it in a way that incorporates the perspectives of a range of stakeholders. The first step in the phase is to build knowledge of content area standards so that educators understand grade level expectations and what rigorous instruction looks like for all students. Then, districts use this shared understanding of high-quality instruction to create a set of non-negotiable criteria for curriculum selection. These criteria include grade levels, content areas, targeted support for specific student populations, pedagogical priorities that support a shared vision for instruction, and cultural considerations. Next, districts manage the selection process, which involves figuring out who will select the materials, when and how they'll do it, and making sure they understand the selection criteria. Lastly, districts work with curriculum publishers to order, ship, print, and unpack new materials before the school year starts and to put the materials in teachers' hands prior to training.

This first phase can feel the most straightforward. Actions like forming a committee to review and select a curriculum, setting a timeline for when selection will happen, and procuring the materials are already familiar to district leaders and seem simple. However, the details within each step – deciding who will serve on the committee, making sure materials get ordered early enough for training, communicating the decision to potentially skeptical community members – can make or break the outcome. Communicating with and investing educators, families, and other community stakeholders can be especially important early on, as doing so helps build a coalition of supporters that can keep the project going, especially when questions and obstacles arise down the road. Teachers, in particular, bring a valuable point of view to curriculum adoptions, and are more likely to be enthusiastic about using new materials if they were involved in the decision to choose them.

Research shows that when teachers are involved in curriculum adoptions early and often, they are more enthusiastic to use the materials.

Six Steps:

- **Set goals**
- **Determine key roles and responsibilities**
- **Make a plan for scheduling, pacing, and use**
- **Make a plan for assessment and grading**
- **Establish systems for supporting leaders**
- **Establish systems for supporting teachers**

The goal of Phase 2 is to create a clear map of what successful curriculum implementation looks like and pave a smooth path that makes the journey easier for everyone involved. Districts set goals around the changes they want to see in teaching practices, teacher understanding and investment in the materials, and student achievement. They identify the key actions required to meet these goals and delegate responsibilities based on expertise and capacity. Based jointly on the structure of the curriculum and students' needs, districts make a plan for how teachers should pace lessons and when and how teachers should modify lessons from their original design. Relatedly, they make plans for how other key academic systems – class schedules, assessment, and grading – should be adjusted to accommodate the curriculum's goals and design. Lastly, districts invest heavily in establishing systems that support leaders and teachers. Districts provide comprehensive training for teachers and leaders early on and set up systems that provide ongoing support, including observation and evaluation, collaborative planning, and coaching.

That Phase 2 has the most steps is a clear signal of the amount of work involved in preparing leaders, teachers, and students to implement and learn from new materials well. In our work with districts and through our research, we found the steps in this phase most frequently differentiated the districts where materials launched well. In these districts, leaders had a clear and nuanced understanding of how different actions and systems connected to one another. For example, leaders recognized when certain curriculum-related responsibilities needed to be completed by school-based leaders who

had on-the-ground knowledge of how the curriculum was working and when other tasks were better performed by district-level leaders with a birds-eye view of the system, because having the right leaders performing the right jobs is an important part of leading change. Or, leaders understood when the design of the curriculum necessitated a change in schedule – like when new ELA materials called for 90-minute lessons that integrated reading and writing rather than two separate classes or lessons – because it impacted teachers’ ability to meet the goals of the lesson.



Three Steps:

- **Support use of the curriculum**
 - Train
 - Plan
 - Coach
- **Gather and analyze data**
- **Celebrate and refine**

The goal of Phase 3 is to support teachers and leaders in using the curriculum to inspire great instruction and increase student learning. Phase 3 involves a triangle of supports for teachers that includes ongoing training, collaborative planning, and coaching with curriculum-specific feedback. This professional development cycle is supported by the continuous process of gathering and analyzing data. Districts use data to find, celebrate, learn from, and replicate successful practices across classrooms and schools. They also use data to identify curriculum goals that are not being met. Leaders work with teachers, students, and other community members to figure out what’s not working and to make improvements. Throughout the curriculum implementation process, districts refine their goals, their approaches to supporting teachers and leaders, and their policies and systems (e.g., grading and assessment).

Unlike Phases 1 and 2 which are linear in their design, Phase 3 is cyclical. Districts support use of the curriculum continuously and use data to celebrate and refine practices as long as the curriculum is being used. This means that Phase 3 doesn't end after the first year. In fact, certain reflections and refinements are best done in years two and three once educators become more familiar with the curriculum's content and scope and enough time has passed to truly assess the efficacy of approaches. For example, districts may choose to rearrange the lessons in a particular unit after feedback from teachers and students or adjust the format of their PLCs to prioritize different pieces of lesson preparation.

REFLECT, INVEST, AND COMMUNICATE

During the curriculum implementation process, districts take time for deliberate reflection. They reflect on the progress they're making as they move through each phase and determine if and when they need to revisit a particular step. For example, a district may designate certain responsibilities to a specific group of people at the beginning of Phase 2, but as work continues may realize that more people need to be added to the team. Districts seek out opportunities to communicate what's going on and why with a wide range of stakeholders, and also take time to ask for and listen to feedback. Districts recognize the importance of building a coalition of supporters and work to invest educators and community members by involving them in the work and incorporating their perspectives.

These three actions – **reflect, invest, and communicate** – are not so much concrete steps as they are general approaches to good leadership. As such, we've positioned them in a bar below the steps, like the foundation of a sturdy building, as an indicator of their importance to each phase and to the whole curriculum implementation process. Being intentional about communicating with and investing stakeholders – a key difference between District E and District B – can have a significant impact on stakeholders' belief in the process and their willingness to persist over time and through challenge. By not treating reflection, investment, and communication as specific and valuable pieces of the process, or simply assuming they will happen on their own, they risk getting lost or forgotten. We recommend that districts make a plan for what reflection, investment, and communication will look like for them during each phase, and we commit to providing resources in these areas alongside our other framework tools.

TOOLKITS

To support districts in using the framework, we're building out a set of resources that match each of its steps. These step-specific toolkits include:

- Indicators of what successful enactment of the step looks like
- Common pitfalls
- Innovative ideas that have worked in real districts
- Guiding questions to support reflection and decision making
- Lots of practical tools to support the work of the step, including sample meeting agendas, written communications, professional development materials, and checklists
- A specific output designed to prompt action and help districts meet the goals of the step

We're sharing one of these toolkits – for the Determining Key Roles and Responsibilities step – in the appendix of this white paper. Determining the most important work to be done, and who is best positioned to do it, was a challenge districts discussed frequently during our interviews. We are sharing this toolkit first with the hope that it can provide immediate support to districts in an area where they've asked for help.

A NOTE ON VISION AND EXPECTATIONS

We want to be very clear about another lesson we learned over and over again in the districts we observed. **The framework steps alone are not enough to ensure a district's curriculum implementation will fly. The glue that holds the framework together is a shared vision for instruction, grounded in deep understanding of expectations for all students.** Each step of the framework should be guided by and seek to serve the vision for what excellent teaching should look like and the standards for student performance. That's why, in the graphic above, we made "instructional vision" the banner that's positioned above all other steps, and the arrows pushing out from the instructional vision banner illustrate how vision drives the curriculum implementation process. Without a compelling sense of how the different steps work together to support a certain kind of teaching and learning, the framework becomes little more than a to-do list. Districts with materials that fly know this, and they treat the curriculum as a lever to get to great instruction grounded in academic standards. Districts whose materials flop, however, often see curriculum implementation as a compliance exercise rather than a strategy for better teaching and learning.

Before going down the path of curriculum implementation, it is critical that educators across the district come to a clear and shared vision for excellent instruction and that teachers understand expectations for students and learning progressions within the content. Many of the curriculum challenges we've seen arise either when educators have competing visions of what good instruction looks like – like in District A – or when teachers just don't know the standards and content well enough to be able to see where the curriculum is driving toward. We recognized this common pitfall by making Step 1 of Phase 1 "Build knowledge of standards." (However, in districts where materials flew, the process of developing and internalizing a shared vision of instruction grounded in the rigor of academic standards often began well before the process of choosing a new curriculum.)

We also want to be upfront that expectations for students are the foundation of excellent instruction. Inequity of expectations – both within and across classrooms – can reveal itself during the curriculum implementation process: when faced with a curriculum that asks students to do things teachers haven't asked of them before, teachers, leaders, and even students themselves can wonder if it's possible. But, the move to more rigorous materials can be a vehicle for raising expectations – we've frequently heard educators say,

“At the front end, I didn't think my students were going to be able to do it but we gave it a try and I was surprised by how well they did.”

We encourage districts to make attention to equity of expectations a deliberate part of their implementation process, and we commit to embedding it throughout the information and resources in our toolkits.

CONCLUSION

By December, we aim to compile a comprehensive set of toolkits, like the one shared here, aligned to the different steps of the framework. Districts will be able to access toolkits by phase – all the resources for Phase 1: Select Great Materials in one file, for example – or one at a time. Our goal is to organize toolkits in a way that’s flexible and accessible for all districts, regardless of where they are in the curriculum change process.

Additionally, we will create supplementary guidance documents that share tailored recommendations for seven commonly-used curricula:

- Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)
- Expeditionary Learning (EL)
- Developing Core Literacy Proficiencies
- LearnZillion
- Eureka
- Go Math!
- CPM

All of these implementation support materials will be open source and available for free.

We hope educators find this framework and toolkit helpful; we hope they take a step toward uncomplicating the process of curriculum implementation, build excitement about the potential of curriculum to support teachers in increasing student learning, and reassure educators that work is being done to make their jobs easier. More so, we hope school and district leaders feel empowered by the information and tools we share here and use them to make confident and strategic decisions that improve instruction and lead to greater outcomes for students.

We are grateful to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their support of this project.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE TOOLKIT: PHASE 2, STEP 2: CLARIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Goal

The goal of this step is to determine a preliminary vision of the responsibilities involved in curriculum implementation – decisions that need to be made, tasks that need to be done, management or mentoring relationships that need to be established – and to assign them to the role or person who has the knowledge and capacity to perform them well. Indicators of success include:

- Everyone involved in curriculum implementation understands the work that needs to be done and for which parts of the work they're responsible
- Roles and responsibilities are logical; educators do work that aligns to their job descriptions and areas of expertise
- Roles and responsibilities are meaningful; educators do work they're interested and invested in
- If something isn't on track, educators know who to talk to
- Educators feel supported and processes run smoothly

Common Pitfalls

- Overlooking or underestimating important roles or responsibilities on the front end
- Creating generic responsibilities (i.e., "data") rather than precise ones (i.e., "set expectations for which data sources will be gathered")
- Assigning too many responsibilities to the same person who then doesn't have the capacity to get them all done
- Assigning responsibilities that require detailed understanding of what's going on in classrooms to leaders who aren't able to spend sufficient time in classrooms
- Not investing enough time up front in making sure leaders at all levels understand academic standards, content area expectations, and the design of the curriculum; leaders may lack the ability to make informed decisions related to curriculum implementation if their knowledge base is too shallow
- Assigning responsibilities that require particular expertise, such as knowledge of a specific content area or instructional coaching experience, to educators who lack background in that area
- Not viewing teachers as leaders; teachers' on-the-ground experience implementing curriculum is valuable and, when appropriate, should be leveraged to inform decisions and provide support

Innovative Ideas

- One school system established a teacher leader program to support curriculum implementation. Teacher leaders received additional training on the curriculum and began teaching it a few weeks ahead of other teachers. As they worked through lessons with their students, they passed along recommendations to the other teachers who were starting to plan for those lessons. The teacher leaders ran grade-level curriculum planning meetings and worked with instructional coaches to provide extra support to peers. These teacher leaders earned a stipend for their additional work and gained leadership experience.
- Several systems have benefited from having all leaders and educators participate in at least one unit study. During the summer prior to implementation, teachers, coaches, principals, supervisors, and superintendents all read the same book, personally completed and discussed the culminating tasks, and looked at the unit design together. This unit study anchored everyone in a shared understanding of expectations for students and the pedagogical approach of the unit, and built basic familiarity with the curriculum's design.
- One charter system established an expectation that all administrators, including coaches and principals, would co-teach one lesson during the curriculum pilot. The charter system reported that this policy was a challenging lift at the front end, but it gave administrators an added perspective that helped them provide better support to teachers once the curriculum was selected and preparation for implementation began. In another district adopting new ELA materials, all school leaders read the novels taught in the units.

Output

The output for this step is a completed **roles and responsibilities matrix** that clearly defines which members of your team are responsible for which pieces of curriculum implementation. This matrix should be shared with all educators in your district for the purposes of transparency and accountability. The matrix may also be helpful for determining the kinds of training and support that each team member needs to perform their responsibilities.

Guidance for Completing the Roles and Responsibilities Matrix

Suggested roles and responsibilities are provided in the following two tables. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather examples of the types of responsibilities district may identify as priorities for their curriculum work. Some of the suggested roles and responsibilities will not be applicable to all schools/districts, and schools/districts may need to create additional roles or responsibilities based on their unique structures and goals. Some responsibilities, such as data analysis or classroom observations, may be assigned to multiple roles; in these cases, distinguish responsibilities as much as possible. Examples of completed matrices are provided, along with a blank matrix template.

Potential Responsibilities that Support Curriculum Implementation

Instructional Planning and Pacing

- Determine which units will be taught and when
- Create planning resources to support teachers, e.g. weekly summaries of objectives and key resources such as reading texts or math tasks; get teacher input on which resources would be most helpful and train leaders, coaches, and teachers on how to use them
- Gather and share teachers' lesson plans and resources with other teachers, as appropriate
- Gather feedback from teachers on what went well and what changes should be made to lessons and units to inform planning for next year
- Provide support to teachers who need help with lesson planning

Support Use of the Curriculum

- Train
- Plan
- Coach

Train

- Create or find curriculum training materials for principals and teachers
- Lead curriculum training sessions for principals and teachers
- If working with outside professional development providers, like a curriculum publisher, contract and manage services and ensure providers are prepared to deliver content to the district's specific audiences
- Ensure professional development is appropriately differentiated for different groups of educators, including principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, teachers of English Learners, and paraprofessionals; ensure trainings provide actionable, role-specific next steps
- Determine when additional curriculum-related professional development needs to be provided, create or find content for that professional development, and lead it
- Participate in all relevant professional development experiences
- Gather and analyze feedback from professional development sessions

Plan

- Set expectations for what teachers will do to prepare for and internalize lesson and unit content
- Lead lesson or unit internalization sessions with teachers, e.g. reading and annotating ELA texts
- Set expectations for what teachers will do during collaborative planning sessions
- Lead collaborative planning sessions with teachers
- Determine what kind of preparation is expected at the lesson level; provide feedback on lesson plans, if needed

Coach

- Set expectations for who will coach and who will receive coaching
- Create or find a curriculum walkthrough tool for classroom observations
- Observe and provide feedback on classroom instruction
- Teach demonstration lessons or co-teach with the curriculum
- Ensure principals, coaches, and other roles who observe classroom lessons have access to curriculum materials

Assessment, Grading, and Data Analysis

- Determine which curriculum-based assessments will be used and when they will be administered
- Determine how curriculum-based assessments will fit into the school's/district's overall assessment plan
- Set expectations for data analysis, including which data sources will be reviewed, how often they will be analyzed, who will be involved in data analysis, and how the data will be tracked
- Create agendas for data reflection meetings; provide guidance on how to reflect on student work and assessments
- Analyze and track student data
- Create grading policies related to the new curriculum
- Create rubrics and other resources, if needed, to support consistent grading practices
- Grade student work and provide feedback to students

Continuous Improvement

- Gather feedback through the selection and implementation process from teachers, leaders, students, and other community members
- Analyze feedback and make recommendations for how to improve supports for teachers and leaders
- Record data and feedback that will be used to make decisions about potential changes for next year

Potential Roles that Support Curriculum Implementation

- District-based curriculum leader or Chief Academic Officer
- District-based content area leader(s)
- School-based curriculum or content area leader(s)
- Principal supervisors
- Principals
- Assistant principals
- Instructional coaches
- Grade level chairs or content area teacher leaders
- Teachers
- External partners (e.g., publishers, professional development providers)

CREATING YOUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX: PROTOCOL

Creating your district's roles and responsibilities matrix for curriculum implementation should be a collaborative effort. We recommend that districts assemble a team of 6-10 educators, including district leaders, principals, assistant principals, coaches, and teachers. This protocol takes approximately one hour.

Step 1: Explain the meeting's objective. Share the sample matrices in this workbook as examples of what your finished product should look like. Identify which district examples may be similar to yours (e.g., your district has school-based literacy coaches).

Step 2: Together, brainstorm a list of all the roles involved in your district's curriculum implementation plan, e.g., district curriculum specialists, principals, teachers, etc.

Step 3: Pass out sticky notes to each team member. Give everyone five minutes to write down as many potential responsibilities as they can think of, writing one responsibility on each sticky note. Share responsibilities from the list in this workbook as examples.

Step 4: Read the sticky notes out loud together. Remove duplicates. Brainstorm additional responsibilities, if needed, and write them on sticky notes. Once a set of responsibilities is finalized, make an identical list on another set of sticky notes. You will need two decks of sticky notes for the next step.

Step 5: Split the team into two small groups. Give each team a deck of the sticky notes with the suggested responsibilities and a poster or section of a chalkboard as a space for organizing. Have each group draw the gridlines for a roles and responsibilities matrix on their poster or chalkboard, using the blank template in this workbook as a model. Then, have each group assign responsibilities to particular roles by placing their sticky notes in the appropriate boxes within the matrix.

Step 6: Have each small group share their matrix. Ask questions and discuss differences. The goal is to collaboratively agree on one common matrix.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Example 1:

This matrix belongs to District 1, a small district that created a school-based literacy coaching program to support the implementation of a new English language arts curriculum. District 1 created the literacy coach job description in a way that allows coaches to spend almost all their time working with teachers. Principals supervise the literacy coaches at their school, but otherwise spend little time directly supporting curriculum implementation. (Since there are no assistant principals in District 1, principals are responsible for the majority of schools' priorities around operations, safety, environment, and community relations.)

District Curriculum Specialist**Principals****School-based Literacy Coaches****Teachers****Instructional Planning and Pacing**

- Determine which units will be taught/when
- Set expectations for what teachers will do to prepare for and internalize lesson and unit content

- Create planning resources to support teachers, e.g. weekly summaries of objectives and key resources such as qualitative text analyses
- Provide feedback to teachers on lesson preparation notes and text annotations

- Submit weekly lesson preparation notes and text annotations to literacy coaches

Support Use of the Curriculum

- Train
- Plan
- Coach

Train

- Create or find curriculum training materials for principals, coaches, and teachers
- Lead curriculum training sessions for principals, coaches, and teachers
- Use survey data and interviews with teachers and coaches to determine when additional curriculum-related PD is needed
- Gather and analyze feedback from professional development sessions

Coach

- Work with literacy coaches to set expectations for coaching practices (who, how often)

Train

- Participate in professional development experiences

Plan

- Set expectations for what teachers will do during PLC meetings

Coach

- Observe and provide feedback on classroom instruction, based on the district's observation rubric

Train

- Participate in professional development experiences

Plan

- Lead monthly unit internalization sessions with teachers, which include reading and annotating unit texts and responding to all writing tasks
- Provide support to teachers who need help with lesson planning and preparation
- Join weekly ELA planning meetings with each grade level team

Coach

- Create or find a walkthrough tool that is specifically aligned to the curriculum and use it during classroom observations
- Observe classroom instruction and provide feedback to all teachers implementing the new curriculum at least once every two weeks

Train

- Participate in professional development experiences

Plan

- Participate in curriculum internalization sessions and plan for classroom instruction
- Take turns leading weekly ELA planning sessions in grade level teams

Assessment, Grading, and Data Analysis

- Determine which curriculum-based assessments will be used and when they will be administered
- Determine how curriculum-based assessments will fit into the school's/district's overall assessment plan
- Update grading policies based on new curriculum
- Set expectations for school-based data practices, including which data sources will be collected and how frequently they will be tracked

- Lead regular data reflection meetings with grade level teams and literacy coaches

- Create rubrics and other resources, if needed, to support curriculum-aligned assessment and grading practices
- Support teachers in operationalizing grading rubrics and other resources
- Participate in regular data reflection meetings

- Grade student work and provide feedback to students
- Collect and track assessment data
- Participate in regular data reflection meetings

Continuous Improvement

- Create surveys to gather feedback on how to better support teachers, principals, and coaches
- Create a system for gathering teachers' feedback on which units and lessons should be changed for next year

- Provide feedback on the curriculum; take notes about what went well and what changes should be made to lessons and units to inform planning for next year

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Example 2:

This matrix belongs to District 2, a mid-size district that is implementing a new math curriculum. The district's Director of Math Instruction is the primary curriculum implementation leader and works with both principals and instructional coaches. Since instructional coaches are responsible for supporting teachers in all content areas, not just math, District 2 has designated one math teacher in each grade level as a curriculum leader to provide another layer of support. Math team leaders had to apply for the role and earn an additional stipend for their work.

	District Director of Math Instruction	Principals	Instructional Coaches	Grade Level Math Team Leaders	Teachers
Instructional Planning and Pacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which units will be taught and when Gather, vet, and share exemplar lesson plans and resources with math teacher network Set expectations for what teachers will do to prepare for and internalize lesson and unit content 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share strong examples of lesson plans and resources with Director of Math Instruction, who will vet and share widely Review lesson plans and make sure teachers are on pace with the curriculum 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit plans to instructional coaches
Support Use of the Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train Plan Coach 	<p>Train</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or find curriculum training materials for principals, coaches, and teachers Lead curriculum training sessions for principals, coaches, and teachers Determine when additional curriculum PD is needed Gather and analyze feedback from PD sessions <p>Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set expectations for what teachers will do during curriculum planning and internalization sessions <p>Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or find a curriculum-specific walkthrough tool that principals and coaches can use during classroom observations 	<p>Train</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in professional development experiences <p>Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share feedback with the Director of Math Instruction and instructional coaches on classroom observation trends and suggestions for additional support Observe each math classroom once a month and provide feedback using the curriculum-specific walkthrough tool (in addition to quarterly observations using the district's evaluation rubric) 	<p>Train</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in professional development experiences Review material from PD sessions with teachers, if needed Lead weekly meetings with grade level math team leaders to discuss progress and areas where more support is needed <p>Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share feedback with Director of Mathematics on instructional trends and suggestions for additional support Teach demonstration lessons or co-teach with the curriculum Observe each math classroom once a month and provide feedback using the curriculum-specific walkthrough tool 	<p>Train</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in professional development experiences <p>Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead weekly lesson internalization sessions (discuss objectives for following week, complete daily tasks) Lead monthly unit internalization sessions (discuss key unit concepts, pacing, complete the culminating task) Complete math lesson plans one week ahead of schedule and share with other teachers as a resource for their own planning 	<p>Train</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in professional development experiences <p>Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in curriculum internalization sessions and plan for classroom instruction
Assessment, Grading, and Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which curriculum-based assessments will be used and when they will be administered Determine how curriculum-based assessments will fit into the school's/district's overall assessment plan Set expectations for school-based data practices (what data is collected and when) Create grading policies related to the new curriculum Create rubrics and other resources to support curriculum-aligned assessment and grading practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead regular data reflection meetings with grade level teams and instructional coaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support teachers in collecting and analyzing data 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and track student data Grade student work and provide feedback to students
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create surveys to gather feedback on how to better support teachers, principals, and coaches Work with Grade Level Math Team Leads to gather teachers' feedback on changes for next year 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share feedback with district leaders on how professional development systems can be improved to better support teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather feedback from teachers on lessons and units to inform planning for next year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback on the curriculum; take notes about what went well and what changes should be made to lessons and units to inform planning for next year

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Example 3:

This matrix belongs to District 3, a large district that has prioritized the role of principals and assistant principals in supporting the implementation of a new English language arts curriculum. District 3 has literacy coaches; however, each coach works with a group of schools and is primarily responsible for leading professional development and managing assessment systems. Since principals and assistant principals are school based, District 3 wants them to play a leading role in providing feedback to teachers and helping them prepare for instruction. In District 3, principals supervise both assistant principals and teachers and the Chief Academic Officer supervises literacy coaches.

	Chief Academic Officer	Principal Supervisors	Principals	Assistant Principals	Literacy Coaches (support group of 3-5 schools)	Teachers
Instructional Planning and Pacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set expectations for what teachers will do to prepare for and internalize lesson and unit content 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect lesson plans from teachers; review one daily plan closely and share feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which units will be taught and when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather, vet, and share exemplar lesson plans and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit weekly lesson plans to assistant principal
Support Use of the Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train Plan Coach 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create or find curriculum training materials Train literacy coaches on the new curriculum Work with literacy coaches to determine when additional curriculum PD is needed Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set expectations for curriculum planning and internalization sessions Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with principals and assistant principals to set expectation for observations and coaching Work with literacy coaches to create or find a curriculum-specific walkthrough tool for classroom observations 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in PD Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join each principal for monthly instructional rounds; support the principal in gathering feedback on curriculum implementation using the walkthrough tool 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in PD Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead quarterly unit internalization sessions with grade level teams, where teachers discuss the texts and key themes students will work on that quarter and collaboratively work through writing tasks Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe all classrooms quarterly and provide feedback on classroom instruction, based on the district's evaluation rubric Join assistant principals for monthly observations of all ELA classrooms, using the curriculum-specific walkthrough tool 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in PD Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead weekly lesson internalization sessions (teachers rehearse part of an upcoming lesson) Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe each ELA classroom monthly and provide feedback on instruction, using the curriculum-specific walkthrough tool Use observations and student data to determine which teachers need additional support 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in PD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train principal supervisors, principals, and assistant principals on the new curriculum Meet monthly with each grade level team to discuss strengths and challenges of the new curriculum; share information from these sessions with the CAO and other coaches to determine when additional training is needed Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If requested, join principals or assistant principals on classroom observations to support curriculum implementation 	Train <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in PD Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in curriculum internalization sessions and plan for classroom instruction
Assessment, Grading, and Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set expectations for school-based data practices, including which data sources will be collected and how frequently they will be tracked Work with literacy coaches to create grading policies related to the new curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join each principal for monthly data meetings with at least one grade level team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead regular data reflection meetings with grade level teams and assistant principals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in regular data reflection meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which curriculum-based assessments will be used and when they will be administered Determine how curriculum-based assessments will fit into the school's/ district's overall assessment plan Create rubrics and other resources to support curriculum-aligned assessment and grading practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and track student data Grade student work and provide feedback to students
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with literacy coaches to analyze trends in feedback and make a plan for how to improve curriculum use and support for teachers 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather feedback from teachers on how to improve professional development supports related to the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather feedback from teachers on lessons and units to inform planning for next year, e.g. modifications to specific lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback on the curriculum; take notes about what went well and what changes should be made to lessons and units to inform planning for next year

BLANK TEMPLATE

	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3	Role 4	Role 5	Role 6
Instructional Planning and Pacing						
Professional Development						
Coaching and Feedback						
Assessment, Grading, and Data Analysis						
Continuous Improvement						

SHARING YOUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX: SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear Teachers and Leaders,

We're excited for the upcoming launch of our new curriculum, **[name new materials]**. We believe these materials will help teachers engage all students, meet their diverse needs, and increase learning. We're also hoping they save teachers time, create more opportunities for creative differentiation, and support all of us in our growth as professionals.

We have begun planning for how teachers and leaders will work together to use these new materials. One part of ensuring a smooth implementation process that leads to greater outcomes for our students is having a clear understanding of who is responsible for each of the important tasks related to curriculum. To help us figure out how we can all support one another, we assembled a team of educators to create a chart that identifies the different roles involved in our curriculum work and which responsibilities each role can fulfill. This chart, called the Roles and Responsibilities Matrix, is attached here. The matrix does not tell educators how to do the work; rather, it lists the work that needs to be done and outlines which pieces of it we are all expected to own.

We believe this Roles and Responsibilities Matrix offers a level of detail that will help us provide support to all educators and make sure nothing important falls through the cracks. This quote, from a member of our planning team, sums up our optimism: ***[Consider adding a quote from someone involved in creating the matrix, such as "Working on this matrix with colleagues was an important activity. It helped me understand all the moving parts that go into implementing new curriculum materials. We're all so busy and it can be easy to forget things you want to do, but I think this matrix will help everyone remember what we're committing to and who we can go to for help when we need it"]***

We want to thank the following educators who were part of the team that created our Roles and Responsibilities Matrix:

- **Name, position (e.g., Mary Summers, Teacher at Harlon Elementary School)**
- **Name, position**

We encourage all educators to review this matrix in advance of the upcoming **[school year, semester]**. If you have feedback or questions about the matrix, please contact **[contact person]**.

We look forward to partnering with all of you as we give our students new materials that we're confident will help them succeed!

Sender's Name



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