



Kentucky Department of  
**E D U C A T I O N**

Curriculum-Based Professional Learning  
Guidance Document



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## Introduction

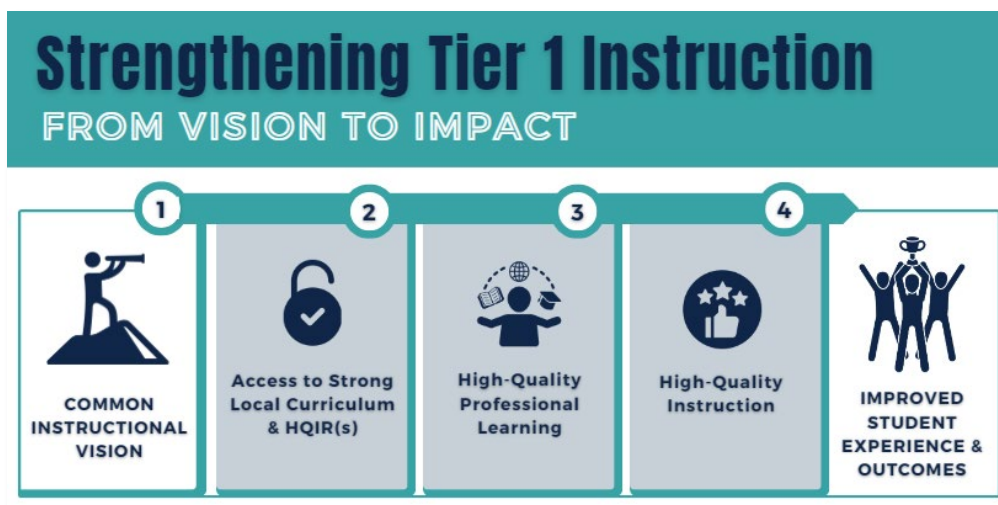
This guidance document is intended to support effective implementation of a local curriculum supported by high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) through curriculum-based professional learning. Specifically, the purpose of the guide is to provide:

- An understanding of curriculum-based professional learning and its role in supporting local curriculum implementation and overall improvement of instructional practice; and
- The three stages of curriculum-based professional learning, including each stage’s purpose, key questions to consider and key tools to support the work.

Strong Tier 1 instruction is at the core of an effective Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, enabling it to promote vibrant learning experiences and improved outcomes for every student. When it comes to strengthening Tier 1 instruction, there are four critical actions districts and schools should consider. These actions, as represented in Figure 1.1, include:

- Establishing a common instructional vision for each content area;
- Ensuring teachers and students have access to a strong, locally developed curriculum supported by high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs) aligned to the instructional vision;
- Equipping educators with high-quality professional learning (HQPL) that promotes effective implementation of the curriculum and associated HQIRs, while building content knowledge and pedagogy; and
- Improving the quality of instruction all students receive.

**Figure 1.1.** *Strengthening Tier 1 Instruction*



The Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) [Curriculum Development Process](#) guides districts in improving instructional coherence across content areas by translating academic



standards into local curricula anchored in HQIRs. The process provides guidance to districts in articulating a local instructional vision for a content area, selecting HQIRs aligned to the vision to support development of the local curriculum, and implementing and monitoring the curriculum over time.

*Note: The KDE **strongly recommends** following phases 1-3 of the [Curriculum Development Process](#) prior to implementation to help avoid common “pitfalls” such as lack of understanding and ownership by staff, incoherence between curriculum and intended outcomes caused by not having an instructional vision and curriculum/resource misalignment to the Kentucky Academic Standards.*

Research demonstrates that simply providing teachers with a curriculum and HQIRs without also providing them professional learning focused on **how** to implement those resources effectively to meet the needs of all students will not impact student achievement (Short & Hirsh, 2023; Blazar, et. al, 2019; Instruction Partners, 2019). **Educators need professional learning that deepens understanding of what to teach, improves content knowledge and pedagogy through exploring how best to teach it, and facilitates transfer by being connected to the curriculum used in classrooms** (Rivet, 2020). This need, now recognized in the field, has resulted in beginning to establish high-quality professional learning that is curriculum based.

### What is Curriculum-Based Professional Learning?

Curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) is set within the [high-quality professional learning](#) ecosystem. While still incorporating all the characteristics of high-quality professional learning, CBPL also:

- Centers on supporting educators as they implement the local curriculum using high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs),
- Invites teachers to participate in vibrant, inquiry-based learning symmetrical to what is intended for the student experience, and
- Focuses on how to teach a specific content area or grade level using the instructional resource(s) teachers will then use with their students.

This direct engagement with high-quality, “practice-supportive” or “educative” resources facilitates the transfer of professional learning by reducing additional work needed to integrate elements of best practice back into classroom instruction (Hill & Papay, 2020; Short & Hirsh, 2023), producing positive effects on teacher practice and student outcomes (Taylor, et.al, 2015).

Curriculum-based professional learning is **ongoing, job-embedded and rooted in active experiences** (e.g., workshops, professional learning communities, peer observations and coaching) that allow teachers to evolve their practices, expand their content knowledge and challenge their beliefs (Short & Hirsh, 2023). Within their PLCs, teachers collaboratively engage



in protocols such as unit and lesson internalization, lesson rehearsal and student work analysis, to deepen their understanding of the content and pedagogy, and to address common concerns.

**Enabling Conditions of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning**

According to Short and Hirsh (2023), there are three essential, or enabling conditions, necessary to support curriculum-based professional learning: **leadership, resources and coherence**. These three enabling conditions can define expectations of district leaders, school leaders and all others responsible for supporting teachers and students. Taken together, they help to build and sustain learning organizations that emphasize investment in HQIRs and support for effective implementation toward realizing the district’s instructional vision and improving outcomes for all students. Table 1.1 describes some essential characteristics of each enabling condition (Short & Hirsh, 2023).

**Table 1.1. Enabling Conditions for High-Quality Professional Learning Structures**

Enabling Condition	Characteristics
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes learning as their core work and models a relentless pursuit for equity and excellence by prioritizing learning for all and creating a culture of respect.</li> <li>• Commits to and consistently communicates the instructional vision for teaching and learning and how the local curriculum and HQIRs support that vision.</li> <li>• Promotes, models and visibly engages in active, inquiry-based learning for both students and adults rather than simply transmitting expertise.</li> <li>• Shares responsibility, decision-making and risk-taking to promote a common purpose and collective responsibility for student success.</li> <li>• Engages teachers and instructional leaders in ongoing conversations to deepen their understanding of curriculum and improve instruction.</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require investment of time and funds in standards-aligned instructional resources and technical assistance providers to support sustainable use.</li> <li>• Require protected time for teachers to internalize units and lessons within the HQIR and for collaborative learning and problem-solving throughout implementation.</li> <li>• Focus on building expertise by (1) bringing in outside curriculum and professional learning facilitators to support implementation and (2) cultivating internal expertise by identifying and supporting teacher leaders, instructional coaches and school leaders.</li> </ul>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligns system and school policies, priorities, structures and curriculum to a shared instructional vision for teaching and learning within and across classrooms and schools.</li> <li>• Uses a shared instructional vision to inform leaders’ decisions, communications and actions.</li> <li>• Creates a common language for all staff across the district.</li> </ul>

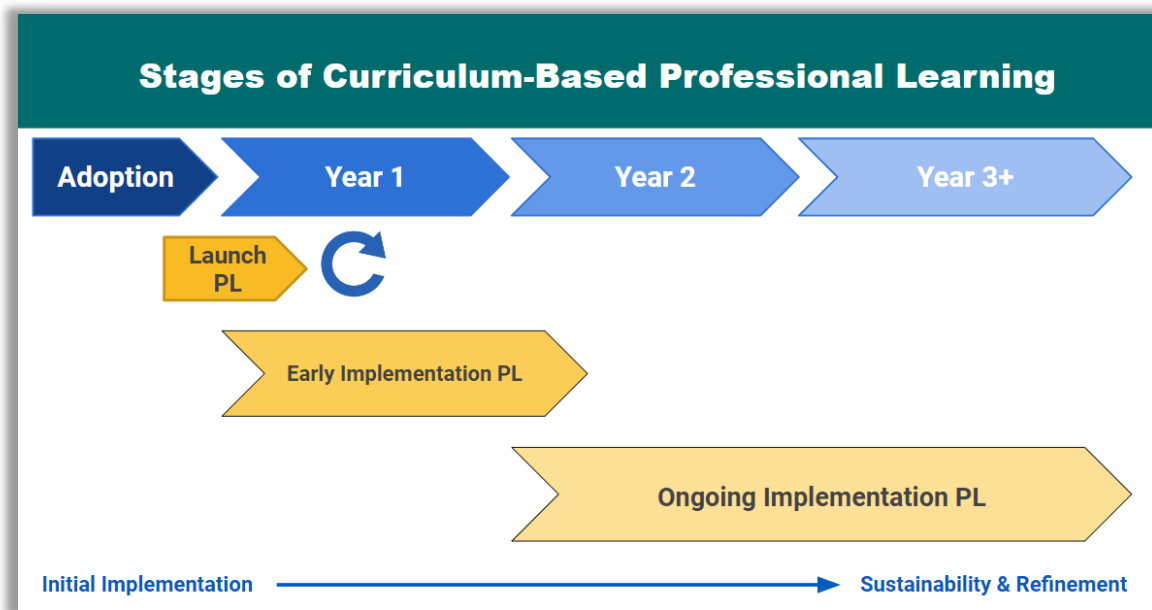


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritizes strategies that promote curriculum-based professional learning and puts them into action; selects strategies that complement existing efforts and promote further success.</li> <li>• Helps educators understand the HQIRs’ underlying structures, guiding them along a path to mastery and building expertise through successive experiences and opportunities to reflect.</li> </ul>
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## Stages of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

Effective implementation of the local curriculum and supporting HQIRs is an ongoing process that may take 3-5 years to reach a point of refinement and established sustainability in the work. The KDE has identified three critical stages, shown in Figure 1.2, of curriculum-based professional learning to support teachers and leaders in moving toward refinement and established sustainability: **Launch PL**, **Early Implementation PL** and **Ongoing PL**.

**Figure 1.2.** *Stages of Curriculum-Based Professional Learning*



\*Adapted from [Rivet Education](#)

This section of the guidance document includes a brief description, key questions to consider and tools to support the work for each of the three stages of CBPL.



### Stage 1: Launch PL

Launch professional learning (PL) is designed to equip teachers and leaders with an initial understanding of the HQIR and prepare them to implement with fidelity during early implementation. The focus of launch PL is to:



- Build understanding of the HQIR’s instructional design principles and arc of learning and how the approach helps bring to life the district’s content-specific instructional vision.
- Establish a clear vision of what strong implementation looks like “in action” (using videos to show what it should look like in PLCs and classrooms, for example).
- Engage in lessons as learners that mirror the student experience to help understand them from a student’s perspective;
- Navigate any publisher-specific logistical and technological considerations involved in classroom use of the HQIR, such as the components of the materials, how they are organized and how teachers and students access them.
- Introduce unit internalization and provide time for teachers to internalize first unit(s) with colleagues who teach the same content and curriculum.

Launch PL typically occurs in the **spring/summer prior to the first year of implementation, possibly extending through the opening month**, to build staff familiarity with the local curriculum document and associated HQIRs. It will need to be repeated each year moving forward for educators who are using the curriculum and HQIR for the first time—because they are new to the school, district or just teaching a different grade level. Launch is also when leadership develops and begins to implement HQPL structures (including structures for collaboration, like PLCs) to support the job-embedded professional learning that will continue throughout implementation.

### Key Questions

- **Planning Considerations:**
  - How will training be provided for each stakeholder group to build understanding of the HQIR’s design principles and arc of learning in order to help the district realize its instructional vision for the content area? Who will develop and facilitate this professional learning (e.g., HQIR/HQPL providers, district instructional leaders)?
  - What might leaders and teachers need to see to help them envision what strong implementation looks like (e.g., videos, site visits, vignettes)?
  - What protocol (e.g., HQIR/HQPL vendor-specific, KDE-provided) will be used to guide unit internalization? What professional learning is needed to support staff understanding and effective use of the protocol? Who will develop and facilitate this professional learning (e.g., HQIR/HQPL providers, district instructional leaders)?
- **System and Structures Considerations:**
  - What existing HQPL structures (e.g., workshops, professional learning communities, peer observations and coaching) will be leveraged to support professional learning anchored in the HQIR? What other HQPL structures need to be developed and implemented?



- What changes to structures and expectations for professional collaboration need to happen to support Launch and curriculum-based PL more broadly?
- How will onboarding be provided each year for those new to the district/school or grade level/course?
- **Measuring Impact Considerations:**
  - What specific data will be analyzed to measure the effectiveness of PL for this stage of implementation (e.g., surveys after initial workshops, notes from PLC observations)?
  - How will feedback be gathered and analyzed regarding each type of professional learning experience supporting this stage of implementation to ensure educators' PL needs are met (through surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.)?

## Key Tools

- **System Support Tools:**
  - [Curriculum Implementation Framework](#) – Outlines roles and responsibilities for each stage of curriculum implementation
  - [Structuring Professional Learning Cycles](#) – provides guidance on how to structure quarterly professional learning cycles with examples for early and ongoing implementation.
  - **Early Implementation Observation Tools** - support classroom observation, feedback and reflection aligned to common indicators in the first year of implementation
    - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Mathematics](#)
    - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Reading and Writing](#)
    - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Science](#)
- **Foundational PLC Protocols:**
  - **Unit Internalization Protocols** – Support understanding of the HQIR at the unit level:
    - [Mathematics Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
    - [Reading and Writing Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
    - [Science Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)



## Stage 2: Early Implementation PL

Early Implementation professional learning (PL) is designed to provide job-embedded PL opportunities that are collaborative and experiential in nature and to deepen understanding of the curriculum and what is required for effective implementation. The focus of Early Implementation PL is for leaders and teachers (including co-teachers) to:

- Engage in lessons as learners that mirror the student experience to help understand them from a student's perspective;
- Continue unit internalization and begin unit reflection when ready;





- Introduce lesson internalization and use selectively in PLCs for key lessons;
- Participate in lesson rehearsal sessions focused on refining key aspects of the curriculum, supported by coaching, when possible;
- Examine models (e.g., classroom observations, curated videos) that elevate exemplary practices aligned to strong implementation;
- Introduce student work analysis and begin to analyze data from curriculum-embedded assessments to identify strengths and gaps in student learning and needs for additional PL; and
- Provide ongoing feedback using a locally determined classroom observation tool aligned to the common indicators for early implementation (e.g., HQIR/HQPL vendor-specific tool, KDE-provided early implementation observation tool).

Early Implementation PL occurs during **the first year of implementation of the local curriculum and HQIR(s), possibly extending into academic year two**. As teachers begin using the HQIR(s) with fidelity and students have opportunities to engage with grade-level content and tasks, data gathered from classrooms inform establishment of systems, structures and expectations to support effective implementation.

### Key Questions

- **Planning Considerations:**
  - In what ways (as facilitator, coach, participant, etc.) will leaders engage with teachers in HQPL structures and protocols that support classroom implementation of HQIRs?
  - What tools and/or protocols (e.g., HQIR/HQPL vendor-specific, KDE-provided) will be used to support professional learning during this stage of implementation? What professional learning is needed to support staff understanding and effective use of the tools and/or protocols? Who will develop and facilitate this professional learning (e.g., HQIR/HQPL providers, district instructional leaders)?
  - What models and examples might leaders and teachers need to help develop understanding of key aspects of the curriculum and HQIR (e.g., videos, classroom observations)?
- **System and Structures Considerations**
  - When will PL occur, and what might be an optimal cadence for it based on educator needs and capacities?
  - Who will be responsible for monitoring and responding to PL needs that emerge from analysis of student learning data?
- **Measuring Impact Considerations:**



- What specific data will be analyzed to measure the effectiveness of PL for this stage of implementation (e.g., surveys after initial workshops, notes from PLC and classroom observations, student work samples)?
- How will feedback be gathered and analyzed regarding each type of professional learning experience supporting this stage of implementation to ensure educators' PL needs are met?

## Key Tools

### ● System Support Tools:

- [Curriculum Implementation Framework](#) – Outlines roles and responsibilities for each stage of curriculum implementation
- [Structuring Professional Learning Cycles](#) – provides guidance on how to structure quarterly professional learning cycles with examples for early and ongoing implementation.
- **Early Implementation Observation Tools** - support classroom observation, feedback and reflection aligned to common indicators in the first year of implementation
  - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Mathematics](#)
  - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Reading and Writing](#)
  - [Early Implementation Observation Tool for Science](#)
- [Learning Walks Protocol](#) – Supports school/district level observations to gather formative data on key aspects of implementation and develop a shared sense of next steps.

### ● Foundational PLC Protocols:

- **Unit Internalization Protocols** –Support understanding of the HQIR at the unit level:
  - [Mathematics Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
  - [Reading and Writing Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
  - [Science Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
- **Lesson Internalization Protocols** –Support understanding of the HQIR at the lesson level:
  - [Mathematics Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
  - [Reading and Writing Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
  - [Science Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
- [Lesson Rehearsal Protocol](#) –Support refining lesson delivery

### ● Additional PLC Protocols:



- [Student Work Analysis Protocol](#) – Introduced in year one and used consistently in ongoing implementation; supports analyzing student data to inform instructional practice
- **Unit Reflection Protocols** - Supports high-level unit reflection to inform future instruction:
  - [Mathematics Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
  - [Reading and Writing Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
  - [Science Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
- [Text Talk Protocol](#) – Supports shared understanding of texts and of the standards-based learning they make available



### Stage 3: Ongoing Implementation PL

Ongoing professional learning (PL) supports educators in becoming more skillful in their use of the HQIR as they take increased ownership and make smart adjustments to meet the needs of all learners. More specifically, the focus of ongoing PL is to:

- Continue collaboratively internalizing units and lessons and practicing lesson rehearsal with a focus on anticipating student thinking, responses and learning needs;
- Continue to engage in shared learning through workshops, coaching, observations, feedback and model classroom visits anchored in the HQIR and the district’s instructional vision for excellent, equitable grade-level instruction;
- Continue to engage in lessons as learners that mirror the student experience to help understand them from a student’s perspective;
- Develop understanding of how to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of all students and support grade-level instruction without compromising the integrity of the resource;
- Engage in reflection, including unit reflection, and analysis of student work, especially evidence of learning from the HQIR, to address students’ diverse and/or individualized learning needs using HQIR-embedded supports; and
- Provide ongoing feedback using a locally determined classroom observation tool aligned to instructional shifts for ongoing implementation (e.g., HQIR/HQPL vendor-specific tool, KDE-provided instructional practice guide).

Ongoing PL **often begins in year two and continues throughout successive years of implementation.** Professional learning systems, structures and policies are continually refined toward increased effectiveness and sustainability. As teachers hone their practices over time, students are observed taking increased ownership of their learning and engaging deeply with other students in grade-level content and tasks.



## Key Questions

- **Planning Considerations:**
  - What tools and/or protocols (e.g., HQIR/HQPL vendor-specific, KDE-provided) will be used to support professional learning during this stage of implementation? What professional learning is needed to support staff understanding and effective use of the tools and/or protocols? Who will develop and facilitate this professional learning (e.g., HQIR/HQPL providers, district/school instructional leaders, instructional coaches, PLC/teacher leads)?
  - How will leaders utilize HQPL structures (e.g., workshops, professional learning communities, peer observations and coaching) to support teachers in using their understanding of the HQIR and information about students' needs to drive smart adjustments to the curriculum, HQIR and their instruction?
- **System and Structures Considerations:**
  - How will the district build leadership capacity in providing effective coaching and feedback anchored in the HQIR to teachers using the district's common observation tool?
  - How will onboarding be provided each year for those new to the district/school or grade level/course?
- **Measuring Impact Considerations:**
  - What specific data will be analyzed to measure the effectiveness of PL for this stage of implementation (e.g., surveys after initial workshops, notes from PLC and classroom observations, student work samples)?
  - What data will be collected during each year of implementation, and how will the data be used to inform ongoing professional learning needs and to determine teachers' readiness to assume greater ownership of HQPL structures and protocols that drive improvements in practice?

## Key Tools

- **System Support Tools:**
  - [Curriculum Implementation Framework](#) – Outlines roles and responsibilities for each stage of curriculum implementation
  - [Structuring Professional Learning Cycles](#) – provides guidance on how to structure quarterly professional learning cycles with examples for early and ongoing implementation.
  - **Instructional Practice Guides (IPG)** - Tool to support classroom observation, feedback and reflection:
    - [Mathematics IPG](#)



- [K-12 Comprehension in Reading and Writing IPG](#)
    - [K-3 Foundational Skills IPG](#)
  - [Science IPG](#)
  - [Learning Walks Protocol](#) – Supports school/district level observations to gather formative data on key aspects of implementation and develop a shared sense of next steps.
  - [Adjusting High-Quality Resources](#) – Supports making “smart adjustments” to HQIR when needed without compromising the instructional integrity of the resource.
- **Foundational PLC Protocols:**
    - **Unit Internalization Protocols** - Foundational protocol to support understanding of the HQIR at the unit level:
      - [Mathematics Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
      - [Reading and Writing Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
      - [Science Unit Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
    - **Lesson Internalization Protocols** - Foundational protocol to support refining lesson delivery:
      - [Mathematics Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
      - [Reading and Writing Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
      - [Science Lesson Internalization Protocol](#) and [Note-Catcher](#)
    - [Lesson Rehearsal Protocol](#) - Foundational protocol to support refining lesson delivery
    - [Student Work Analysis Protocol](#) - Introduced in year one and used consistently in ongoing implementation, the protocol supports analyzing student data to inform instructional practice
    - **Unit Reflection Protocols** - Supports high-level unit reflection to inform future instruction:
      - [Mathematics Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
      - [Reading and Writing Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
      - [Science Unit Reflection Protocol](#)
  - **Additional PLC Protocols:**
    - [Text Talk Protocol](#) - Supports shared understanding of texts and of the standards-based learning they make available
    - **Lesson Study Protocol** (coming soon)- Used later in implementation as teacher teams are ready to further refine key teaching practices within the local curriculum and HQIR(s)



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