

High-Quality Instructional Resources

What are High-Quality Instructional Materials?

The Kentucky Department of Education defines High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs) as materials that are:

- Aligned with the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS);
- Research-based and/or externally validated;
- Comprehensive to include engaging texts (books, multimedia, etc.), tasks and assessments;
- Based on fostering vibrant student learning experiences;
- Culturally relevant, free from bias; and
- Accessible for all students.

Why Are They Needed?

Teachers deserve to have access to HQIRs that increase their content knowledge, provide guidance to inform strong instruction and support implementation of grade-level appropriate assignments. Access to comprehensive, HQIRs enables teachers to adjust lessons to meet the diverse needs of students and to focus their time, energy and creativity on bringing lessons to life and engaging students with the content.

Instructional resources are not just for teachers; they are critical for student success. Students deserve access to standards-aligned instructional resources and grade-level assignments to help them reach the intended learning outcomes with the KAS. They also deserve HQIRs that are engaging, accessible and inclusive of the cultural diversity and perspectives of their communities. Students are entitled to HQIRs to use, learn from and guide their practice.

What Does the Research Say?

- HQIRs that are aligned to state standards can reduce variability in the quality of instruction across classrooms and help boost student achievement, but teachers often do not have resources that are aligned to their state's standards ([SREB, 2017](#)).
- When teachers don't have access to HQIRs, they spend 7-12 hours per week searching for them online often leading to inconsistent quality that impacts low income students of color the most ([Goldberg, M., 2016](#)).
- Research shows students of color, those from low-income families, English learners, and those with mild to moderate disabilities are less likely to have access to strong grade-level instruction and HQIRs in the classroom than students who are in classrooms with mostly white students and in higher income communities ([The New Teacher Project, 2018](#)).
- Another study found that the average cost-effectiveness ratio of switching to HQIRs is almost 40 times that of class size reduction ([Koedel, C., & Polikoff, M., 2017](#)).
- Students in classrooms that used one HQIR for four consecutive years outpaced comparison students by a margin of 38 percentile points—equivalent to four additional years of learning ([Steiner, 2018](#)).
- Providing teachers with a set of instructional resources without also providing them with professional learning focused on how to implement those resources effectively to meet the needs of all students will not impact student achievement ([Blazar, D., et al., 2019](#)).

Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Learning

Research demonstrates a positive link between high-quality professional learning (HQPL), high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs), teaching practices and student outcomes. Effective professional learning not only has the potential to improve both classroom instruction and student outcomes, but also it can be effective in educator recruitment and retention. When designing and/or selecting HQPL at the local level, ensure alignment with the characteristics below.

Content-focused and standards-aligned: Deepens educators' understanding of what to teach and how to teach it within the context of the Kentucky Academic Standards, local curriculum and high-quality instructional resources.

Equity-focused: Supports educators in effectively engaging all students in rigorous, grade-level appropriate tasks, including students with acceleration needs, English learners and students with exceptional needs.

Consider of adult learners: Incorporates active learning: Addresses expressed and unexpressed expectations and motivations while attending to mindsets and emotional states, is asset-based, builds on participants' prior knowledge and experience and invites them to connect learning to meaningful goals and immediately useful actions.

Symmetrical to a vibrant student experience: Is inquiry-based, interactive and collaborative. Involves expert models and practice as educators participate in lessons as learners, plan, internalize, rehearse, observe and reflect with colleagues who teach in the same content area and use the same curriculum.

Uses models of effective practice: Is based on the local curriculum and provides modeling of high-quality instruction that offers educators a clear vision of what evidence-based practices look like. Models may include, but are not limited to, lesson plans, unit plans, sample student work, observations of peer teachers, and video or written cases of teaching.

Provides coaching and expert support: Offers expertise about curriculum, adopted high-quality instructional resources and evidence-based practices, focused directly on educators' and students' individual needs.

Offers feedback and reflection: Provides job-embedded time for educators to intentionally think about, receive input on and to refine practice.

Is sustained and continuous: Provides educators with adequate time to learn, rehearse, implement and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate refinements in practice over time.

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