

# Navigating the Adaptive Challenges of Adopting High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

UnboundEd supports school districts nationwide as they execute HQIM adoption processes anchored in research-based best practices, aligned to local context, and grounded in the belief that all students deserve access to HQIM. Adopting high-quality instructional materials requires the skillful navigation of technical and adaptive challenges. To build investment and ensure optimal outcomes for all students and teachers, we must guide district leaders in navigating these nuanced challenges, particularly the adaptive challenges, at each phase of the process. To that end, we have identified best practices to leverage in navigating the adaptive challenges of adopting high-quality instructional materials:

Deciding to Adopt High-Quality Instructional Materials	
Cause for Pause	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leader of adoption work is not prepared to lead systems change or lacks the cache to build investment across teams.</li> <li>The district's challenges with materials are not caused by the materials themselves (e.g., the real issue is a lack of a strong implementation plan and buy-in).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge the change and loss involved in materials adoption for all team members across the district.</li> <li>Gather data from various team members on the district's current use of instructional materials and future materials needs.</li> <li>Select the window for adopting HQIM aligning with local policy and needs.</li> <li>Name the risks associated with system-wide change (financial and interpersonal).</li> <li>Identify a leader for the adoption process who knows the risks involved in leading system-wide change.</li> </ul>

Creating Your District Vision and Assessing District Needs	
Cause for Pause	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district's current needs are not taken into consideration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the district's current approaches to pedagogy and instruction and analyze their alignment with the state's vision.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district has conducted a surface-level analysis and needs assessment that failed to identify key issues to address in future adoption.</li> <li>• The instructional vision is too broad to impact the adoption process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a district-specific instructional vision aligned with district needs and context.</li> <li>• Identify mindsets necessary for district instructional vision to become a reality.</li> <li>• Ensure the district instructional vision is clear, specific, student-centric, and observable.</li> </ul>
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Recruiting and Selecting an Adoption Team	
Cause for Pause	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district adoption team does not reflect all of its grade levels, campuses, roles, and perspectives.</li> <li>• All district adoption team members are unable to share openly with one another.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure participation on the district adoption team from team members across multiple campuses, teams, and roles and from across the community.</li> <li>• Create a collaborative team culture through transparency and clear communication.</li> <li>• Leverage subcommittees within the district adoption team to elevate the perspectives of groups across the district.</li> <li>• Ensure that all district team members, both on the district adoption team and not, can share their voices and perspectives.</li> </ul>

Materials Discovery		
Cause for Pause	Recommended Practices	
	Use a rubric to review instructional materials. Leverage the choice below that aligns with your local context.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A limited number of people have selected the materials for review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your state provides a rubric:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review the state-created rubric.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your state <b>does not</b> provide a rubric:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create a rubric aligned with the district instructional vision</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a lack of transparency around the selection criteria for materials.</li> <li>● The rubric is too broad or specific to use effectively in materials discovery.</li> <li>● The time and resources dedicated to the development of and training on the rubric are limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analyze the evidence gathered on the rubric on each set of instructional materials.</li> <li>○ Identify areas aligned with your instructional vision where your district wants additional information.</li> </ul>	<p>and research-based instructional best practices with the District Adoption Leadership Team and/or Adoption Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gather input on the rubric from the District Adoption Team</li> <li>○ Practice in a low-stakes setting with the district rubric so that all Adoption Team members feel prepared to review materials.</li> <li>○ Prioritize time for training on the district rubric.</li> </ul>
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Materials Investigation	
Considerations	Recommended Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The district has conducted a limited investigation.</li> <li>● There is a lack of vision and clarity on the type of data to collect in the investigation.</li> <li>● The district has moved too urgently or too slowly during the investigation.</li> <li>● The district lacks a plan beyond the selection of materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarify the purpose of the Materials Investigation and the difference from Materials Discovery.</li> <li>● Pair a publisher presentation with an additional investigation pilot, committee review, or grade-level study option.</li> <li>● Create a timeline that provides ample time for investigation and reflects the need to provide students with HQIM soon.</li> <li>● Plan for sustainability. Identify the implementation needs and identify team members who can serve on an implementation team.</li> <li>● Prepare for the launch of materials and procurement with a multi-phase communication plan.</li> </ul>