

Seize the Moment

Four dimensions of instructional materials that put students first

We have an opportunity to re-imagine more equitable systems that address the underlying issues of racism and marginalization in our schools.

As schools return from COVID-19 closures, instructional recovery plans must reimagine how to engage all students in rigorous academic content, including instructional materials.

Schools are tasked with accelerating student learning while simultaneously preparing for the compounding impact of learning disruptions on students who were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

“We believe that equity requires our scholars are exposed to and effectively instructed on grade-level standards. This has also given us the ability to hold conversations around what we can expect for kids to be able to do rather than operating with a deficit approach to what we have traditionally considered too hard for our kids to be able to accomplish.”

Kenan Bishop
Chief Equity and Achievement Officer
Lorain City School District

However, this problem is not totally new. Many vulnerable students were routinely denied access to quality instruction before the pandemic. If the promise of high-quality instruction is to be realized for all students—*especially those who have been systematically underserved*—high-quality instructional materials will not be enough. We urge leaders to define an intentional vision for

equitable instruction, including leveraging high-quality instructional materials and resources that help solve technology segregation. For reference, here are the definitions ANet has developed of [equitable instruction](#) as part of our own organization’s journey to become anti-racist.





We recognize that change is hard, especially in this time of uncertainty. Leaders must prioritize the best approach and materials for their communities and honor their teams’ readiness and capacity for change. This guide offers a few critical steps district and school leaders can take **right now** to use instructional materials and resources to accelerate student learning, despite the challenges in front of them.

We outline **four key dimensions of instructional materials**² district and school leaders should consider. Each dimension will include multiple paths for planning depending on district/CMO and

¹ Students who may be experiencing increased economic challenges, are from racially marginalized communities, have inequitable access to quality distance learning, are multi-language learners, have learning and attention differences, and/or are immunocompromised.

² [Dimension 1](#) - Access to grade-level content; [Dimension 2](#) - Supporting students during instructional recovery; [Dimension 3](#) - Clear expectations and guidance; [Dimension 4](#) - Promote self-efficacy and anti-racism

school levels of readiness. Each dimension takes an **assets-based approach** by using materials that address equity challenges in order to recognize, celebrate, and build upon students' strengths, reflecting ANet's beliefs on equitable, anti-racist education.³

	<p>Dimension 1 Establish access to grade-level content</p>	<p>Strategies for shifting to high-quality materials that appropriately reflect the demands of grade-level standards.</p>
	<p>Dimension 2 Support and maintain universal access</p>	<p>Strategies for using high-quality materials to address unfinished learning and make grade-level content accessible for ALL students.</p>
	<p>Dimension 3 Consistency of implementation</p>	<p>Strategies for communicating expectations around consistent implementation of high-quality materials and setting up structures that support implementation.</p>
	<p>Dimension 4 Promoting student engagement through anti-racism</p>	<p>Strategies for increasing student learning and self-efficacy through ensuring that materials and instruction reflect anti-racism.</p>

How to use this guide:

- 1. Complete the leader reflection tool.** Elicit multiple perspectives to inform your responses. This might mean engaging principals or ensuring representation from teams across your central office.
- 2. Choose a dimension.** Discuss, as a leadership group, which dimension you plan to focus on. Clearly define why.
- 3. Reflect and take action.** Continue to reflect and gather data to inform how you will take action on your chosen dimension. Use the “Reflect & Take Action” recommendations listed for each dimension as a starting place. Identify 2 to 3 priority actions that your team plans to take.
- 4. Plan next steps.** Plan for how to inform and engage stakeholders around these priority actions. This will likely entail targeted work around developing a communication and professional learning strategy.

³ [Click here for more information](#) on why ANet strives to be an anti-racist organization and our beliefs regarding equity and anti-racism in education.

Leader Reflection Tool: Choosing a Path

This process is designed to help you and your team determine if you need to modify your current strategy and, if so, which dimensions require attention. Effective instructional recovery planning does not require throwing out past strategic priorities; instead, we believe leaders should evaluate which previous investments might accelerate progress and reinvention.

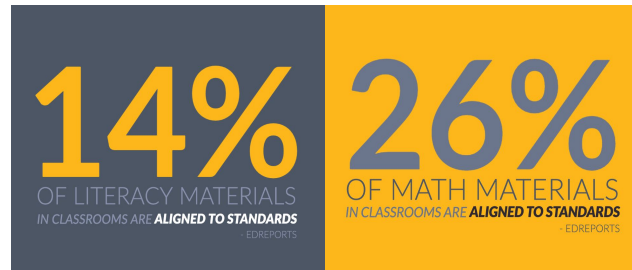
We encourage you to complete this tool with members of an interdepartmental team to reflect across four dimensions of your instructional materials strategy. Based on the results, teams should select one dimension for further study and take action.

Think of this guide as a *Choose Your Own Adventure* novel. Depending on the dimension you select, your actions steps will differ. However, we strongly recommend focusing on one section at a time and moving through them in the order they appear within this document. (*i.e. tackle Dimension 1 before Dimension 2, and Dimension 2 before 3.*) The tool is linked [here](#).

4 Dimensions of Materials Strategy: Self- Reflection Tool		
<p>This tool is designed to evaluate the four dimensions of your instructional materials strategy to determine whether you need to modify your approach for the 2020-21 school year. Use the checklist below to reflect on which criteria are currently met by your instructional materials strategy.</p> <p>Use the 4 sections of our paper to better understand what is needed to strengthen that particular dimension in your current approach. We recommend focusing on one section at a time and moving through them in the order they appear within this document.</p>		
Dimension 1: Do your materials provide access to grade level content for all STUDENTS?		
Questions	Tools to answer this question	Yes/ No
Demonstrate alignment to standards?	Use Ed Reports ratings	
Demonstrate the presence of shifts?	Use Ed Reports ratings	
Are teachers feeling positive about the current instructional materials available?		
Is there evidence that students and families are responding favorably to the current instructional materials?		
Dimension 2: Are your current materials equipped to serve your STUDENTS during instructional recovery?		
Do your materials...	Tools to answer this question	Yes/ No
Do your schedules allow all students to have equal time and access studying grade-level content? Do you avoid pulling students out of core instruction to receive below grade level remediation?		
Provide compacted scope and sequence that allow for greater focus?	Ask your publisher	
Provide materials to support students at home??		

Dimension 1: Establish access to grade-level content

One of the most important things leaders can do right now to guarantee access to grade-level, standards-aligned content for all students is to adopt a rigorous, externally reviewed, high-quality set of instructional materials.



We know that “*when students have access to grade-level content they rise to the occasion more often than not.*”⁴ However, according to Ed Reports, students have limited access to high-quality materials: only 26% of math materials in the classroom are aligned to standards, and in ELA, only 14% of materials.⁵

District and school leaders have the responsibility of selecting and implementing high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) for students who are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶

The following examples highlight two districts that adjusted their instructional materials to ensure all students had access to grade-level content. These two examples represent districts with varying readiness for change. One took a more traditional approach while the other made these changes over a shorter period of time.

Monroe City Schools, Louisiana

The need for swift change resulted in Monroe City using creative solutions to better serve their students during school closures in the 2019-20 school year. Prior to COVID-19, Monroe City Schools planned

“Our shift was about giving teachers all the tools they needed to be successful in a virtual format so that students could be successful with state standards.”

Serena White
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Monroe City Schools, Louisiana

to make Zearn Math (a top-rated, blended learning curriculum based on Eureka Math) readily available for elementary schools to use in their math intervention programs during the 2020-21 school year. Schools would continue using Eureka for core instruction and Zearn as a math intervention resource.

COVID-19 upended this plan. Monroe needed a quick solution to support student and teacher success with standards during remote learning.

⁴TNTP. [The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down - and How to Fix It](#). 2018.

⁵EdReports.org. [Prioritize Content when Evaluating Digital Materials](#). May 2020.

⁶ E.g. students who are experiencing increased economic challenges, are from racially marginalized communities, have inequitable access to quality distance learning, are multi-language learners, have learning and attention differences, and/or are immunocompromised.

The Monroe district team decided to speed up their original timeline and make Zearn available in spring 2020. Zearn gave teachers a high-quality math intervention resource to supplement their existing Eureka materials. The district knew providing teachers with both Zearn and Eureka would enable greater success while limiting the extent to which teachers felt they needed to pull from unvetted resources to meet the shifting demands of virtual learning environments.

Zearn also provided virtual professional learning modules for teachers to learn about the curriculum during this period of transition. Teachers built their understanding of the resource and how to use it effectively. Early data indicates that a large percentage of students were able to engage with Zearn digital lessons during the period of distance learning.

Blackstone-Millville Regional School District, Massachusetts

Blackstone-Millville adopted high-quality instructional materials as part of a longer-term strategy that took into account various readiness conditions. At the beginning of ANet’s partnership with Blackstone-Millville, students were underchallenged in both ELA and math. Classroom observations revealed that teachers often broke assignments into procedural steps and focused on solving assignments, rather than engaging with conceptual and knowledge-based learning. Students did not have an active role in grappling with content.

To address these challenges, Blackstone-Millville district leaders engaged in a selection and adoption process during fall 2019 to improve the quality of their ELA materials in grades K-12, increasing instructional rigor. Blackstone-Millville plans to implement their newly selected curriculum in the 2020-21 school year. However, the district continues to weigh readiness conditions for implementation, including features of the curriculum that allow for remote learning.

“We can’t leave good instruction to chance for any kid. Every student needs those equal opportunities.”

Jason DeFalco
Superintendent
Blackstone-Millville Regional School District

Reflect & Take Action: Dimension 1

Below is a series of reflection questions and associated action steps. The list provides action items that vary in the amount of change they might represent for your system. Some may represent small tweaks while others may require large scale changes. We encourage you to prioritize **1 to 2 actions** that are appropriate for your context.

Reflect	Take Action
<p>1. Is your school/district open and ready to try something new?</p>	
<p>2. Do your materials align with your vision for quality instruction for all students? Could another product provide teachers with improved support for reaching all students in all settings?</p>	<p>Be Bold. Adopt high-quality instructional materials. Consider adopting HQIM if your parents, teachers, students, and leaders are ready for something new. Ed Reports provides consumer reports of instructional materials and will release technology enhancements later this summer that will be available for the 2020-21 school year, including virtual and hybrid delivery models. <i>If you choose this action, go to Dimension 3 for guidance on implementing new materials with students at the center.</i></p>
<p>3. Do materials support learning in hybrid settings? Do materials have both digital and print components? What technology is required to implement these resources?</p>	<p>Leverage the Ed Reports Instructional Materials Technology Information survey to understand the markers of high-quality digital materials that offer digital and print versions of content for a smooth delivery in both virtual and hybrid formats.</p>
<p>4. Are you aware of resources provided by the state that might increase student access to HQIM?</p> <p>5. How are your interventions currently set up? Do teachers make</p>	<p>Look for Creative Solutions. Leverage resources from your state or other states with similar standards. For example, Louisiana and Mississippi are offering innovative solutions to support districts, such as releasing video lessons from HQIM on public broadcasting and making high-quality curriculum available to all LEAS for 2020-21, free of charge.⁷ Texas has allowed districts to use their allotment funds towards printed</p>

⁷ Texas has also released strong resources on their [Texas Home Learning](#) platform.

<p>their own materials or use an existing program?</p>	<p>materials and texts that are sent directly to students' homes during school closures.</p> <p>Instead of changing your entire core curriculum, choose intervention materials that address prior grade-level skills and content AND provide opportunities for students to engage in rigorous, grade-level content. Consider prioritizing high-quality, open-source materials with strong digital components.⁸ Here is a list of Open Education Resources that have been rated green on Ed Reports.</p>
<p>6. Do you have content leaders who understand the standards and have capacity to support developing short-term solutions?</p>	<p>Evaluate Short-Term Fixes. Consider providing training and support for teachers and school leaders around a few high-leverage modifications they can make to existing materials that work well in a variety of formats. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Math: Infuse high-quality math tasks into units. ● ELA: Supplement your existing literacy program with appropriately complex, high-quality texts that build knowledge of the world. Maintain a text-based approach.
<p>7. Are there reasons stakeholders might be adverse to change?⁹</p>	<p>Think Long-Term. Consider what it will take to build a strong change climate in your school/district in the long-term. How can you foster a change climate that will support selecting and adopting HQIM?</p>

⁸ Strong examples of HQIM intervention programs include: Expeditionary Learning, Learnzillion, and Match Fishtank!

⁹ For example, have there been a lot of new initiatives or changes tied to academics recently?

Dimension 2: Support and Maintain Universal Access

Simply having standards-aligned materials is not enough: we must ensure that all students, especially those who have been systematically pushed to the margins, are able to make good use of these tools to accelerate their learning.

“This moment of disruptive innovation has opened up mindsets in ways that have allowed us to make a lot of change happen quickly.”

Rebecca Kaye
Chief of Information and Accountability
Oklahoma City School District

It is natural to make assumptions about what is best for students as we return to school. Across the country, districts big and small, urban and rural are navigating the shifting realities presented by remote learning. Powerful stories have emerged about what is possible if we use data to test our assumptions and reimagine new solutions for supporting and maintaining access to grade-level coursework for ALL students.

Oklahoma City School District, Oklahoma

Oklahoma City provides an example of what is possible when we test our assumptions. Early on during school closures, leaders assumed a large number of students lacked access to high-speed internet and that providing students with access to technology, for at-home learning, would be impossible. However, after leveraging a community survey, leaders’ narrative shifted from “*we can’t do virtual learning because none of our students have internet*” to “*actually, over 70% of our families already have high-speed connectivity and, using data, we can overcome barriers for the remainder.*”¹⁰

Data from the community survey tested Oklahoma City leaders’ assumptions and allowed the central office team to plan for how to ensure the remaining 30% of students had the access they needed. Leaders took the following steps (see the *Reflect & Take Action* section for more):

- Used CARES act funding to order wifi hotspots for summer learning.
- Partnered with local foundations to provide learning packets for students, including school supplies, that were shipped directly to students’ homes.

As districts plan for returning to school in the fall, they are facing other challenges related to supporting students’ access to grade-level content—beyond those technology presents. There are equally important challenges related to academic content, pacing, and remediation. Specifically, how do leaders stand up an instructional program that proactively addresses unfinished learning and teaching while also ensuring that all students are able to access grade-level content?

¹⁰ Quote from Rebecca Kaye, Chief of Information and Accountability at Oklahoma City Schools.

Supporting students in maintaining access to grade-level content will require that leaders: 1) leverage research-based best practices in their planning; 2) create a plan for the year that lays out priority content and skills; and 3) build teachers' and school leaders' skill in creating bridges between student prior knowledge and grade-level content.

It may feel tempting to pick up where students left off in the fall, teaching standards and units/modules from the previous grade level to make sure students have the necessary prerequisite content and skills. However, research has consistently shown that this approach is not effective in accelerating students' learning. In fact, while it might seem counter-intuitive, **the most effective way to support students in making growth is to regularly provide them with access to grade-level tasks.**

A perpetual cycle of remediation can cause students to fall further and further behind. We must find research-based approaches to address student disparities without denying students access to high-quality, standards-aligned instruction.

Reflect & Take Action: Dimension 2

Below is a series of reflection questions and associated action steps. The list provides action items that vary in terms of the amount of change they might represent for your system. Some may represent small tweaks while others may require large scale changes. We encourage you to prioritize **1 to 2 actions** that are appropriate for your context.

Reflect	Take Action
<p>1. What structures have you had in place to address unfinished learning in the past? What does your data tell you about how effective those strategies were?</p>	<p>Commit to Research-Based Practices. Provide alternatives for schools that currently remove students from core instruction for intervention. This practice is ineffective and exacerbates inequities by denying students identified for intervention the same access to grade-level content as their peers. Instead, use intervention time to preview content and texts with students for upcoming lessons. For students with learning differences, review remote learning resources from CAST that utilize Universal Design for Learning.</p> <p>Consider using ERS Comeback Model and Sample Schedules 2.2 and 3.1) to structure effective interventions that support students in accessing grade-level content.</p> <p>Adopt a strong foundational skills program. Use this checklist or Ed Reports K-2 Foundational Skills program reviews to select a</p>

	<p>program designed with the science of reading in mind. Retire whole language and balanced literacy, guided reading, and readers workshop approaches.¹¹</p> <p>Consider how to make more time within existing structures for K-2 students to practice foundational skills. Elevate the importance of phonemic awareness alongside decoding/phonics work for students, even in a virtual setting. Consider leveraging these tips from Nell Dukes around how to do so effectively.</p>
<p>2. Do teachers have a strong understanding of the shifts and standards so they can make meaningful adjustments to their lessons and address learning loss?</p>	<p>Establish a Vision. Communicate expectations about what effective scaffolding and re-teaching in response to learning loss should look like.</p> <p>Math</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage a task-based approach. Ensure students have time to solve and discuss carefully selected high-quality tasks, especially within lessons involving conceptual and application aspects of rigor. ● Elevate the progressions within the standards. Support schools in using ANet’s scaffolding resource to determine which standards represent a “bridge is up” vs. “heavy traffic” moment. Plan for embedded re-teaching opportunities or pause points in the unit to address these gaps. <p>ELA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage the study of grade-level writing substandards to support crafting writing prompts and evaluating student work. ● Provide support for teachers in adding additional scaffolding questions to their existing text-dependent questions to increase access.
<p>3. Do you anticipate that teachers and schools will have less instructional time next year? Has pacing historically been a challenge for your teachers?</p>	<p>Plan to Engage Students in Grade-Level Content on Week 1. Avoid the temptation to spend the first third of the year teaching prior grade-level skills or texts. This may require adjustments to your scope and sequence for the 2020-21 school year to allow for a greater focus on priority content. Use these tips in Math and ELA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Math: Consider how to compact your curriculum by focusing more deeply on the major work of the grade. Here is an example of what this could look like for Eureka - Priority Math Standards by Grade Level.

¹¹SCORE (State Collaborative on Reforming Education). [The Science of Reading](#). Winter 2020.

- **ELA:** Avoid focusing on which reading standards were “missed” during quarter 4. ELA is cyclical in nature, so it is very likely that students engaged with most grade-level reading standards during the first 3 quarters of the year.¹²

4. Are materials accessible to ALL learners?

Provide access to high quality resources for diverse learners.

Ensure students and educators have reliable internet access and devices.¹³ Develop funding models for sustainable technology purchases and leverage openly licensed content. Pay special attention to eliminating those resources and tasks that can be made obsolete by technology.¹⁴ Ensure systems are in place for parents and educators to communicate about assignments or other critical updates.¹⁵ Provide access to quality multilingual learning resources so parents can supplement learning at home.¹⁶

If access to reliable internet is a concern in the absence of a rich learning environment, highly efficacious PK-2 reading, writing, and math digital curriculum is available in a durable and affordable device called onetab. A winner of the 2019 Global Learning XPRIZE, onebillion, the makers of onetab have partnered with nonprofit Open Up Resources to bring onetab to the United States. Learn more about onetab [here](#).

Additional ideas from the Oklahoma City School District:

- Repurpose bond funds that were designated for technology to support state assessments to purchase iPads for younger students and teachers.
- Use data to identify households that require support in accessing the internet. Determine which families consent to district help in getting connected through low-cost programs from local providers.

¹² Note that in *In foundational skills*, schools should have a plan to pinpoint where students left off within the previous grade level’s scope and sequence; 2020-21 schedules/scope and sequences to guarantee students complete the year having covered missed standards.

¹³ Consider working with federal programs such as E-rate through the FCC, as well as with nonprofit partners such as CoSN, EducationSuperHighway, EveryoneOn, to make sure technology enabled learning is available for all students, everywhere, all the time.

¹⁴ Take stock of current systems and processes across learning systems and identify those that can be augmented or replaced by existing technologies. A technology inventory can be a way to cut costs.

¹⁵ Translation technology and/or interpretation services should be in place.

¹⁶ These can be online or electronic, print, or video formats. (See NABE- and TESOLrecommended resources).

Dimension 3: Consistency of Implementation

Selecting a high-quality curriculum is only the first step in the journey to ensuring students have access to high-quality instruction. **Whether this fall includes piloting a new curriculum for your district or simply adjusting the use of existing high-quality materials to fit the new normal, teachers will need support in how to use their materials to improve student learning.**

A recent report on curriculum choice from the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard found little evidence of differences in average achievement gains for schools using different math textbooks in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms.¹⁷ This may be surprising, as past research has found substantial differences in achievement gains for schools using different textbooks (with schools using higher-quality, vetted materials seeing more positive results).

However, the results are less surprising when considering what else researchers uncovered:

- They found that the districts and schools studied did not faithfully implement their materials, instead using them in cursory ways and largely leaving *instruction* unchanged. In a survey, only 25 percent of teachers said they used materials “nearly all the time” for essential activities while just 7 percent use their curriculum exclusively.¹⁸
- Additionally, the average teacher received only 1.1 days of professional development devoted to their curriculum. This was a missed opportunity to allocate time to the invaluable work of internalizing the materials and understanding their design, why they represent quality, and the pedagogical shifts they require. With scant opportunities for development around the use of their materials, teachers at times removed or scaled back the very elements of a curriculum that provided high-quality alignment to the standards.

Overall, this study points to the importance of strong implementation in realizing the promise high-quality materials represent. This point is reinforced by the [Instruction Partners Curriculum Support Guide](#), which was designed to help districts preempt these common implementation pitfalls. The guide emphasizes that many facets of strong implementation, including developing “instructional judgment (deciding what to teach and what to adapt), [are] fundamental to good curriculum implementation.”¹⁹

East Baton Rouge Parish School District, Louisiana

We can glean lessons about strong implementation by studying the work many districts have been doing for years as a larger number of high-quality materials have entered the marketplace. For

¹⁷ Blazer, Kane, Steiger, et. al. [Learning by the Book](#). March 2019. Harvard University Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR)

¹⁸ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/04/02/dont-give-up-on-curriculum-reform-just.html>

¹⁹ [Curriculum Support Guide](#). Instruction Partners.

example, in East Baton Rouge Parish—like many other systems in Louisiana—at first the work of effectively implementing high-quality curricula was difficult. Dr. Charie Worley, an ELA instructional specialist in East Baton Rouge, pointed out that “sometimes leaders struggle when they go into the classrooms because they are not sure what to look for” when evaluating the use of the new materials.

“Many times you go through curriculum implementation and we will say to teachers ‘teach the curriculum with fidelity’... the ‘a-ha’ moment for our whole team was the importance of standards-aligned instruction, which is very different from curriculum-driven instruction. A lot of times I will say to teachers, teach your students and not the curriculum.”

Dr. Quentina Timoll
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum &
Instruction
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools

Dr. Worley observed that the key to helping leaders understand what to look for was a consistent approach to developing administrators as instructional leaders by building their understanding of curriculum. New curriculum is a huge change for teachers, and leaders need to be prepared to shift mindsets through strategic communication, professional learning, and progress monitoring.

Engage Further: Dimension 3

Below is a series of reflection questions and associated action steps. The list provides action items that vary in terms of the amount of change they might represent for your system. Some may represent small tweaks while others may require large scale changes. We encourage you to prioritize **1 to 2 actions** that are appropriate for your context.

Reflect	Take Action
<p>1. What are the current expectations for lesson internalization, lesson planning, and unit planning tied to your selected materials?</p>	<p>Train staff on structures, support, and expectations of effective planning. Ensure that both leaders and teachers are aligned on what effective planning looks like at the unit and lesson level as well as how and when to use data to adapt materials. Set expectations for what strong planning should look like, including expectations around planning protocols such as annotation.</p> <p>Leverage structures like PLCs and ILTs to support with planning on the front end and curriculum-specific observation tools, such as these tools from the Louisiana Department of Education, to provide feedback on the back end. Both should</p>

help prevent teachers from page-turning the curriculum and offer opportunities to provide continued development.

Virtual tip: Connect online and share strong examples of digitized lesson materials (slides, videos, etc.) as part of your plan for [engaging online professional learning experiences](#).

2. Have you messaged expectations around the use of the high-quality materials? Is there centralized guidance around how to use materials, or are those schools left up to school discretion?

Share clear guidance. Set and communicate clear guidance for the use of materials in schools and classrooms as well for pacing. During this especially uncertain time, clear and consistent expectations for use of materials in a virtual, in-person, and hybrid format will be essential in ensuring that ALL students have access to grade level content. Individual teacher autonomy over materials just won't cut it.

Develop a communication plan and consider how to involve key stakeholders in creating and disseminating key messages around the use of materials. Consider using [this simple template](#) to make sure teachers understand the guidance.

Virtual tip: Use [Ed Report's Instructional Technology Information](#) survey to understand how material use will differ in virtual and hybrid formats. Adjust your guidance and messaging to clarify expectations for virtual and hybrid use of materials.

3. How will you know if materials are being implemented consistently and effectively? What data will you use to understand how implementation is going and what adjustments should be made?

Create a progress-monitoring plan. Set measurable goals for implementation as well as quarterly benchmarks to evaluate progress throughout the year. Outline the types of data you will collect. Leverage a variety of sources: insights from student interviews, classroom observations, student work artifacts. Given the additional complexities of instructional delivery and the likelihood of interruptions, we recommend setting more frequent opportunities to step back and adjust your implementation plan. Consider moving from quarterly to bi-monthly reflections.

Consider weaving this into your overall [instructional recovery planning](#) (page 16) for 20-21.

Consider sharing strong implementation artifacts from schools and classrooms to surface bright spots and build a compelling narrative that connects the consistent use of high-quality instructional materials to improved student engagement and achievement.

Virtual tip: To coincide with preparing for PLCs and add data-rich feedback, work with school leadership teams to schedule video observations and collect information on [common barriers](#) marginalized students experience in accessing curriculum.

Dimension 4: Promoting Student Engagement through Anti-Racist Practices

Students returning to hybrid, online, and traditional school formats in the fall will bring assets with them. These may come in the form of learning, experiences, and reflections that occurred during the disruption to their schooling. They will also bring traumas, unfinished learning, and uncertainty around how to continue learning in different formats. [Students, leaders, and teachers can begin to](#)

“Students feel they can’t achieve.
Can’t be something greater”

High School Student
Oklahoma

lessen the academic effects experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic by applying an anti-racist lens to their materials.

District and school leaders have the power to shape students’ experiences in ways that engage students and build on the diverse talents and perspectives they bring into classrooms. Unfortunately, we often see traditional approaches to instruction doing the

opposite, resulting in students feeling marginalized. A high school student at an ANet partner school in Oklahoma shared, *“some students feel they can’t achieve, can’t become something greater.”* This is something Dr. Bettina Love refers to as “spirit murdering,” or the systematic denial of “inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance”²⁰ because of structures of racism. This can result in a loss of students’ sense of self and value. Additionally, the National Institute of Health has compiled research on the importance of students’ self-perception in creating conditions for strong achievement: “...students with high self-efficacy have greater academic expectations and display better academic performance than those with low self-efficacy”²¹.

All too often, textbooks and instructional materials do not honor or reflect the diversity of America’s students... textbooks overwhelmingly reinforced racial bias, police brutality, and incarceration.. textbooks that characterized Africans in the Atlantic slave trade as seemingly voluntary “workers,” not enslaved people.

Chiefs for Change
February 21, 2020

In a recent audit of materials in Baltimore, Palm Beach, and Texas, Chiefs for Change illuminated the extent to which current classroom materials fail to promote a strong sense of identity and self-efficacy. They found that all too often, textbooks and instructional *materials did not honor or reflect the diversity* of America’s students. Textbooks overwhelmingly *reinforced racial bias, police brutality, and incarceration*. These materials *characterized Africans in the Atlantic slave trade as seemingly voluntary*, rather than as enslaved people.

Baltimore City Schools, Maryland

In response to the audit, Baltimore City Public Schools chief Dr. Sonja Santelises **committed to selecting a curriculum that was rigorous, but also included content relevant to Baltimore students, grounded in the history and art of their community** in her Blueprint for Success. This involved a multi-year process of selecting a high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum, and then convening committees of diverse stakeholders to make enhancements to the curriculum in order to reinforce a positive sense of identity for BCPSS students.

²⁰ [We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom](#) by Dr. Bettina Love

²¹ [NIH, 2017](#).

As we return to school, we encourage district leaders to reflect on their instructional materials strategy and begin to consider how to make meaningful shifts that put student experience at the center through intentional moves to include anti-racist content, adopt anti-racist practices, and dismantle policies that contribute to systemic bias or racism. Connecting to students' lived experiences, communities, cultures, languages, and learning styles will be essential aspects of a district's materials strategy in order to provide conditions in which students can engage in grade-level work and take risks in the way the standards demand.

Before you take action, we recommend grounding your team in the definitions of these key terms:

Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is about “dismantling systems of oppression by addressing structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism.” — Tamoya Rose-Watson, Vice President of Equity and Anti-Oppression at ANet.

Critical Literacy

Centers itself with building an academic mindset by pushing back on dominant narratives about people of color and providing narratives about the meaningful contributions of people of color throughout history. It is a learning approach in which students are expected to examine various texts to understand the relationship between language and the power it can hold. Using critical literacy in the classroom can support improving student performance and self-efficacy.

Critical Pedagogy

Aims to raise students' consciousness about inequity in the everyday. This teaching philosophy invites educators to encourage students to critique structures of power and oppression to develop a critical consciousness.²² Gloria Ladson-Billings defines it as “Pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes”.²³

Reflect & Take Action: Dimension 4

Below is a series of reflection questions and associated action steps. The list provides action items that vary in terms of the amount of change they might represent for your system. Some may represent small tweaks while others may require large scale changes. It is important to reflect on

²² [Click here](#) for more information on ANet's Collective External Commitments with the Partners We Serve, starting on page 14.

²³ https://www.cue.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/images/REQUIRED_Source%207%20-%20The%20Theory%20and%20Practice%20of%20Culturally%20Relevant%20Education%20-%20A%20Synthesis%20of%20Research.pdf

your district’s current orientation to equity and where you are in your journey towards anti-racism in order to select the right path for your schools. We encourage you to prioritize **1 to 2 actions** that are appropriate for your context.

Reflect	Take Action
<p>1. How does your district ensure equity through instructional policies?</p>	<p>Set a vision for anti-racist policies and procedures.²⁴</p> <p>Evaluate how current grading practices and use of graduation pathways contribute to systemic inequities, such as denying access for students, based on race, to grade level content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this article to begin to engage in an open dialogue with other district and school leaders about how students are experiencing district/school policies.
<p>2. Do materials promote student agency and advocacy? Do they reflect anti-racist beliefs?</p> <p>3. Do commonly used instructional strategies align to anti-racist practices? For example, are students frequently involved in critical reflections and discussions tied to their communities?</p>	<p>Set a vision for critical literacy and pedagogy to live in your materials and practices. Convene a racially/culturally diverse committee to review materials and ensure texts and tasks foster student agency (through themes such as social justice) and deeper connections to the communities where students live.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this tool to evaluate the texts in your curriculum. Use this resource to supplement your materials with texts and strategies that reinforce critical literacy. Use this resource to supplement writing prompts aligned to critical pedagogy. <p>Communicate vision for critical pedagogical practices that engage students and inspire agency and action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the components of critical literacy NCTE to develop a vision statement for district- wide instruction. Ensure the vision is short and concise.
<p>4. Do materials promote positive identities for students?</p> <p>5. Do commonly used instructional strategies align to</p>	<p>Set a vision for materials and practices that affirm diverse student identities. Convene a diverse committee to review materials for diversity of representation. Additionally, ensure they avoid harmful stereotypes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use this tool to evaluate the texts you have within your curriculum.

²⁴ Image from: <https://education-reimagined.org/what-do-you-mean-when-you-say-student-agency/>

inclusive practices?
For example, are students frequently exploring diverse and inclusive themes that empower them to learn about others as well as themselves?

6. Do classroom routines support and benefit all students in developing a positive sense of self?

- Use this [Text Analysis Tracker](#) to determine the extent to which the texts in your curriculum reflect diversity and anti-bias.
- Use this [resource](#) to select materials that affirm diverse student identities.
- Consider engaging with your publisher to learn more about resources they are providing to increase the diversity, inclusivity, and relevance of texts. There is an increasing trend around providers of high-quality, standards-aligned materials addressing these needs in their products. Some examples are:
 - <https://readingwithrelevance.org/>, a companion tool provided by Open Up Resources
 - The text adaptation frame from [Odell Developing Core Literacy](#), which provides teachers with an approach to bringing diverse and relatable texts into the curriculum.

Communicate vision for practices that reinforce a positive sense of self and identity for students.

- Leverage the Teaching Tolerance [Identity Standards](#) to establish a vision for teaching practices that establish a positive sense of identity. Provide training for teachers on how to deliver instruction aligned to these standards.
 - Use this [Identity and Diversity Standards lesson plan builder](#) with a racially/culturally diverse committee to recommend adjustments to your existing materials.
 - Provide training for teachers on how to create [routines](#) that reinforce student reflection and confidence building.
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