

# Practice What You Teach: Checklist

For System Leaders to Reshape Professional Learning Systems in Schools

Teaching and learning that meets the expectations of college- and career-ready standards is challenging, intellectually demanding work. High-quality instructional materials are an essential resource for bringing the standards to life. Teacher professional learning also is essential to success—for planning instruction that translates the learning expectations into rich learning experiences for students, and for using student learning data to continuously improve practice. Yet current practice too often divorces the “what” of curriculum from the “how” of professional learning, which undermines the efficacy of both.

*Practice What You Teach*, authored by Ross Wiener of the Aspen Institute and Susan Pimentel of Student Achievement Partners, offers recommendations for connecting curriculum and professional learning in schools. The checklist that follows is a resource designed to help you improve outcomes for students by improving teacher development in schools using the recommendations from *Practice What You Teach*. Grounded in research and the experience of successful school systems, it identifies key actions and enabling conditions you can prioritize when organizing professional learning around high-quality instructional materials.

This checklist is broken into two sections: **Foundational Actions** and **Supporting Actions**.

- **Foundational Actions** are those which ensure that high-quality instructional materials and professional learning specific to those materials are available so that teachers’ instructional practices are directly aligned with the content they are teaching. High-quality curriculum is an essential baseline for equity because it creates opportunities for *all* students to engage with quality text and intellectually demanding tasks. Professional learning cannot live up to its potential unless it’s rooted in the content teachers teach in their classrooms.
- **Supporting Actions** are those which ensure that the district culture supports instructional change by fostering a culture of adult learning that, in turn, enables teachers to create engaging learning environments, deliver excellent instruction, assess and respond to the demonstrated needs of their students, and continuously improve their craft. In particular, they address equity proactively to make certain that schools with higher proportions of low-income students and students of color have the resources, personnel, and support to sponsor high-quality, applied learning experiences within the school community.

Under each Foundational and Supporting Action you will indicate where you are along the implementation continuum so that you can identify where to focus your efforts to ensure more cohesive support for educators implementing well-aligned materials in the classroom.

The checklist is a starting point for ongoing discussion and planning to put in place the professional learning system at scale.

These **Foundational Actions** undergird the approach described in *Practice What You Teach*. These core elements are critical to ensuring that high-quality instructional materials and professional development specific to those materials are available.

## Foundational Action 1: Invested in High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIMs). *We have:*

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<p><b>(1A) Invested in high-quality comprehensive instructional materials (HQIMs) that reflect the full demands of college- and career-readiness in mathematics and ELA/literacy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select all that apply:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>___ Selected programs that are highly rated by external expert panels (e.g., EdReports) or engaged internal experts to apply expert-designed rubrics (e.g., IMET, EQuIP).</li> <li>___ Compared information on high-quality programs across multiple jurisdictions (e.g., Louisiana, DCPS).</li> <li>___ Engaged teachers in piloting new products alongside existing materials before selecting.</li> <li>___ Developed our own CCR standards-aligned materials using expert-designed rubrics (e.g., IMET, EQuIP, EdReports rubric) to guide their development and confirm CCR expectations are met.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>AND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered multiple aspects of quality in addition to standards-alignment to promote equity, including:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Presence of research-based instructional practices;</li> <li>» Representation of diverse authors and sources of information, including articulating extent to which materials reflect cultural traditions and backgrounds of students;</li> <li>» Inclusion of educative features for teachers to understand significant design principles and to deepen both requisite content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge;</li> <li>» Adaptation of lessons and units to appropriately scaffold instruction for students with specific learning needs, including English-learners and students who are significantly below grade-level; and</li> <li>» Evidence of student outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<b>(1B) Promoted the use of HQIMs across the district:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removed logistical and financial barriers for schools to purchase aligned HQIMs.</li> <li>Addressed the change-management considerations for implementing HQIMs by prioritizing changes, enlisting and publicizing early adopters and influential champions, assessing incentives and barriers, and reinforcing the compelling “why” to build motivation.</li> <li>Permitted the adaptation of HQIMs by teachers to make changes purposely and coherently to advance equity and access for all students without lowering expectations.</li> </ul>				

## Foundational Action 2: Made Professional Learning Content-Specific. *We have:*

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<b>(2A) Ensured content-specific learning for teachers across the district on a regular basis:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided content leads to schools with deep expertise in their content areas (e.g., mathematics, ELA/literacy) to cultivate teachers as experts in content and instruction.</li> <li>Provided ongoing training for content leads to deepen their pedagogical expertise and knowledge of the curriculum, as well as their ability to provide constructive, non-evaluative feedback and coaching to teachers.</li> <li>Ensured the equitable development and distribution of content leads across all schools so that all teachers have access to expert support from which all students can benefit. This includes identifying areas where content expertise needs to be augmented, and accessing external assistance when necessary.</li> </ul>				

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<p><b>(2B) Provided content-specific support for leaders across the district:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritized roles of system and school leaders to observe content-based instruction in classrooms, to coach teachers, and to focus on the functioning of the professional learning system.</li> <li>• Expected school leaders to engage skillful content leads (including leaders from their own faculty) to lead professional learning experiences that draw on HQIMs as primary sources.</li> <li>• Established clear expectations for district staff, contractors, or third parties offering professional learning opportunities that their content is aligned with district expectations for professional learning, and that it draws on HQIMs as primary sources.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>(2C) Established central structures to support content-specific professional learning in schools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused central office teaching and learning departments on supporting the work of professional learning in schools. This includes articulating an effective division of labor between the central office and schools.</li> <li>• Set system goals for professional learning that are clear, measurable, and directly connected to student learning.</li> <li>• Created simple tools (such as training protocols and sample agendas) to support the smooth and productive facilitation of content-specific cycles of inquiry in schools across the district directly related to the rigorous content from the HQIMs.</li> <li>• Charged the various offices responsible for academic content and professional learning to collaborate, particularly regarding coordination of planning, messaging, and other supports for district educators.</li> </ul>				

Component Descriptors	Not yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<p><b>(2D) Protected time for teachers to learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required schools to provide sufficient time for professional learning by teachers embedded into their daily work schedule (i.e., approximately 90 minutes weekly or 50 hours annually) with the explicit purpose of building expertise.</li> <li>• Created centralized calendars and schedules to optimize time for cycles of inquiry and ensure a coherent meeting sequence through the school year.</li> <li>• Designed district budgets to support professional learning systems by reserving time and resources for teachers to spend in collaboration with one another and with content leads.</li> </ul>				

These **Supporting Actions** ensure that the Foundational Actions are implemented in a rigorous and sustainable manner. Establishing culture is crucial for creating instructional change and for reshaping the professional learning system for educators; that culture endures when the related systems, budgets, and policies align to it.

## Supporting Action 1: Built a Positive Professional Culture. *We have:*

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<p><b>(1A) Created a teacher-led culture of professional learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly acknowledged that core to the work of teachers (and those who support them) is the intellectual preparation needed to engage all students in mastering rigorous content.</li> <li>• Made teacher knowledge and expertise the drivers of the professional learning system.</li> <li>• Solicited teacher input and feedback in designing and implementing professional learning aligned to the HQIMs and the learning needs of students, and made results transparent.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>(1B) Created an adult culture where curiosity and learning are valued:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted an organizational culture systemically with policies that recognize and reward the behaviors of lead learners (e.g., updating recruitment policies to signal ongoing learning is valued, revamping teacher compensation to recognize differentiated roles that contribute to experimentation, new practices, and improved culture).</li> <li>• Celebrated practitioners who assume the stance of a learner, including teachers and principals who take risks when making the changes in practice called for by the HQIMs.</li> <li>• Actively modeled the learner stance from central leadership positions, including the formulation and testing of hypotheses and the documentation of lessons learned.</li> </ul>				

## Supporting Action 2: Aligned Budgets, Policies, and Other Systems to Professional Learning Goals. *We have:*

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress and who is responsible for making sure they happen.
<p><b>(2A) Secured resources and adapted systems in service of aligning to and sustaining professional learning objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensured that all elements of the human capital system (recruitment, onboarding, compensation, and tenure and evaluation decisions) work together to reinforce deep content expertise and a learning orientation.</li> <li>• Established expectations for and a system of collecting and analyzing evidence of student learning generated from the use of HQIMs as one of multiple measures for schools to assess success in inquiry cycles.</li> <li>• Expected research and assessment divisions to collaborate with school leaders to validate that student work products generated in response to HQIMs are predictive of students' success.</li> <li>• Built performance evaluation and school accountability systems that track organizational health and explicitly value the active participation and contributions to collaborative adult learning of both administrations and teachers, producing a productive learning culture among adults and students.</li> </ul>				



