

# Practice What You Teach: Checklist

For School Leaders and Teachers 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.
<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, including transparent demonstrations of alignment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>AND</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.
<p><b>(1B) Consistently implemented HQIMs in mathematics and ELA/literacy in classrooms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicated the shifts in instructional practices needed to support effective enactment of the curriculum.</li> <li>Created structures to ensure teachers implemented the adopted HQIMs with rigor and made appropriate adaptations when necessary to advance equity without lowering rigor.</li> <li>Expected teachers to deeply engage students with their own learning and designed learning tasks and classroom cultures that foster this investment from students.</li> <li>Supplemented HQIMs with culturally responsive materials to promote equity and access for all students, where necessary.</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.
<p><b>(2A) Provided content-specific learning for teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized teachers into teams grouped by content areas and then grade levels, so they can target specific, shared learning goals in mathematics and ELA.</li> <li>Established cycles of inquiry (e.g., learning, application, observation, reflection, and iterative adaptation) directly related to the rigorous content from the HQIMs to be taught in upcoming lessons.</li> <li>Selected content leads in mathematics and ELA with deep expertise in their content areas to cultivate teachers as experts in content and instruction.</li> <li>Provided teachers with content- and curriculum-specific session plans to guide productive inquiry, including agendas and protocols to support their smooth and productive facilitation.</li> </ul>				

Component Descriptors	Not Yet Implemented	Partially Implemented	Fully Implemented	Notes: Describe the types of activities in progress.
<p><b>(2B) Provided content-specific support for leaders:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritized roles of school leaders and teacher leaders to observe content-based instruction in classrooms, to coach teachers, and to focus on the functioning of the professional learning system.</li> <li>• Given the school leadership team responsibility to coordinate and eliminate mixed messages across the school’s professional learning activities.</li> <li>• Insisted on the alignment of the professional learning opportunities for teachers offered from sources outside the school with school-based professional learning, particularly the commitment to connecting content to practice.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>(2C) Protected time for teachers to learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded professional learning into the daily work life of teachers so they receive sufficient time (i.e., approximately 90 minutes weekly or 50 hours annually) to build expertise.</li> <li>• Protected regular times for educators to develop, share, and refine best practices with their colleagues and minimized distractions and competing expectations.</li> <li>• Allocated time for teachers to practice/plan for upcoming lessons, identify learning expectations embedded in student tasks/assessments, and to examine actual student work to determine progress and implications for next cycle of learning and teaching.</li> <li>• Designed school 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.
<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>• Designed professional learning around teacher needs relative to student needs by soliciting teacher input and feedback and made results transparent.</li> <li>• Engaged teacher-leaders as facilitators of learning among their peers.</li> <li>• Enlisted support of early adopters and influential champions to coach their peers and reinforce the motivation for the desired change.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>(1B) Created an adult culture where curiosity and learning are valued:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively modeled the learner stance from leadership positions, including the formulation and testing of hypotheses and the documentation of lessons learned.</li> <li>• Created trust by decreasing the stakes of making mistakes, and protecting safe spaces for teacher learning.</li> <li>• Celebrated practitioners who assume the stance of a learner, including teachers who took risks when making the changes in practice called for by the HQIMs.</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.
<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 within the school (recruitment, onboarding, compensation, and tenure decisions) work together to reinforce deep content expertise and a learning orientation.</li> <li>• Employed protocols for reviewing student work to reflect on instructional decisions, student progress and learning needs, and indicators of successful inquiry cycles.</li> <li>• Conducted classroom observations on a regular basis to gather such evidence as how teachers are mastering the new curricula, as well as whether they have increased student engagement in lessons and made assignments stronger and more cognitively demanding.</li> <li>• Collaboratively selected school learning goals focused on content- and curriculum-specific topics.</li> </ul>				

