

## Guidance for Virginia Divisions: Selecting an Approved Core<sup>1</sup> Literacy Program

**Purpose of this document:** The high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) selection and adoption process will be unique to each division's context, priorities, and vision. This document is intended to share general best practices for engaging in the HQIM selection process, along with sample steps and resources divisions may choose to leverage and/or adapt as they engage in this important work.

- **Important note:** *The high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) listed in the [Approved Core Instructional Program Guide \(2023\)](#) have already gone through an extensive review process focused on alignment to Virginia's Standards of Learning and evidence-based literacy instruction grounded in science-based reading research. Divisions can be confident that all programs listed here meet those criteria; therefore, the process described below is focused on ensuring division context is considered.*

### General Best Practices for High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Selection:

- Form a committee: committee members should represent a variety of roles and perspectives. Ideally, this committee will meet regularly during the selection and adoption process to co-develop the process, analyze feedback and data, closely review programs, and lead ongoing efforts to get input from and invest stakeholders in the process and final decision. The committee may include district leaders, school leaders, instructional coaches, reading specialists, teachers, and family/community members.
- Identify key stakeholders (board members, division leaders, school leaders, teachers, families, students) and keep the lines of communication open throughout the selection and adoption process. Preview early that a new adoption is on the horizon, gather feedback on priorities, and keep everyone informed throughout the selection process.
- Seek out stakeholder feedback: ask stakeholders what matters most to them in a core ELA program, and be transparent about how feedback informed your decisions during the process (e.g. *"We heard that giving students opportunities to engage with authentic trade books was highly important to teachers and families, so we ensured that this was a component of the program we selected"*).
- Plan for the technical: start laying the groundwork and establishing expectations and systems for procurement and distribution of materials as early as possible in the spring to ensure teachers have access to new materials by the summer.

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<sup>1</sup> The Virginia Literacy Act also requires implementation of approved supplemental and intervention literacy programs. The approved list of these programs will be released in April. Many of the processes and resources included here may also be useful when evaluating and selecting supplemental and intervention programs. Guidance for selecting approved supplemental and intervention programs is included on page 4.

### Core Literacy HQIM Selection Process At-a-Glance

- Step 0:** Lay a foundation for change management and effective HQIM implementation in your division.
- Step 1:** Name your division’s top priorities and criteria for a literacy HQIM, considering context and stakeholder input.
- Step 2:** Review and narrow down your options using the [Approved Core Instructional Program Guide \(2023\)](#).
- Step 3:** Conduct a closer review of each HQIM on your short list.
- Step 4:** Make a final decision and lay the groundwork for implementation.

Action Steps	Sample Process	Resources and Considerations
<p><b>Step 0:</b> Lay a foundation for change management and effective HQIM implementation in your division.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Draft and finalize your division’s vision for literacy instruction. Your vision will be a north star during the selection process.</li> <li>2. Deepen your understanding about why HQIM adoption is essential for realizing your vision, and share the rationale and connection between HQIM and literacy success for students with stakeholders to build buy-in.</li> <li>3. Establish a shared vision of success for implementation of the VLA and HQIM in your division and ensure all stakeholder groups have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities during adoption and implementation.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Division Literacy Plan (Section 1: Vision) and instructions (accessible <a href="#">on this page</a>)</li> <li>● Literacy Network Implementation Series <a href="#">Session #1 Case Study</a>: “Successfully Navigating Change and Leading VLA Implementation”</li> <li>● Video (3 min): <a href="#">“Setting Sail with Strong Materials”</a> (resource for sharing the “why” behind HQIM)</li> <li>● <a href="#">Virginia Literacy Act Implementation Playbook</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 1:</b> Name your division’s top priorities and criteria for a literacy HQIM, considering context and stakeholder input.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a system (e.g. survey) for gathering input and feedback from stakeholders (teachers, families, etc.) on what they want to see in a literacy HQIM.</li> <li>2. Meet as a committee to review the stakeholder data to analyze trends and identify priorities.</li> <li>3. Consider your division’s current landscape of literacy instruction, including unique needs of students and consideration of the relative experience and knowledge base of K-5 educators.</li> <li>4. Make a list of your division’s top priorities or “non-negotiables” for a new literacy HQIM.</li> <li>5. Finalize the process you will use to select an HQIM,</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your division’s mission and core values</li> <li>● Your division’s current landscape for literacy instruction</li> <li>● Sample criteria and priorities for literacy HQIM (<i>Appendix A</i>)</li> <li>● Customizable rubric template for HQIM review (<i>Appendix B</i>)</li> <li>● <a href="#">Virginia Literacy Act Implementation Playbook</a></li> </ul>

	<p>leveraging guidance below as a starting point. If desired, develop a rubric you'll use when reviewing HQIM.</p>	
<p><b>Step 2:</b> Review and narrow down your options.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the list of approved programs, keeping your division's priorities top of mind.</li> <li>2. Based on each program's described strengths and challenges, make a short list of the top two or three programs that meet your priorities and you would like to review in more depth as a committee. Ensure that each program on your short list appears to include the HQIM "non-negotiables" identified in step 1.</li> <li>3. Communicate selection process updates to stakeholders, making sure to highlight where their feedback helped inform decisions.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Approved Core Instructional Program Guide (2023)</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>All approved programs are fully aligned to Virginia's Standards of Learning and evidence-based literacy instruction grounded in science-based reading research.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Completed rubrics from the Core Curriculum Review process (and a blank copy of the rubric used) are available for download <a href="#">on this page</a></li> <li>● Board-approved procurement and pricing information for VLA K-5 Core Curriculum is also available for download <a href="#">on this page</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Note: Click on the "Procurement and Pricing for Virginia Literacy Act K-5 Core Curriculum Approved by the Board of Education, December 2023" once on the page.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3:</b> Conduct a closer review of each HQIM on your short list.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schedule time with the publisher to learn more about the product and to secure samples (digital or hard copy) of the programs on your narrowed list.</li> <li>2. As a committee, determine how you will approach the closer review of each program. Determine which rubrics and tools the committee members will use. You might choose to divide up review responsibilities and report back on your findings to the group. If time and capacity permits, committee members may do a close review of each program collaboratively.</li> <li>3. Conduct at least one detailed program review as a</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Detailed ELA Curriculum Review: Sample Process Checklist (<i>Appendix C</i>)</li> </ul>

	<p>committee to ensure you are normed on process and look-fors. Ensure that tools like checklists and rubrics are used to ensure consistent reviews.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Complete all detailed review(s) of programs on your short list and prepare to share your findings and discuss with the committee.</li> <li>5. Ensure that reading specialists and teachers evaluate materials for usage and collect feedback using a rubric or a checklist to ensure their thoughts are elevated in decision-making meetings.</li> <li>6. Consider having teachers use the two or three materials in sample lesson planning and model lesson delivery experiences to ensure the materials can be used as intended.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Step 4:</b> Make a final decision and lay the groundwork for implementation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet as a committee to go over findings from your detailed program rubrics, checklists and reviews. Use a protocol to support you in taking an unbiased, data-driven approach to making a final decision.</li> <li>2. After carefully considering your options and data from throughout the selection process, come to consensus and make a final decision.</li> <li>3. Take necessary steps to present and seek approval for adoption and funding for procurement from the board.</li> <li>4. Identify key messages you want to share with stakeholders about why this program was selected for your division and how their feedback and input informed selection. Communicate these messages to the broader community.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sample protocol for final decision making (<i>Appendix D</i>)</li> <li>● Board-approved procurement and pricing information for VLA K-5 Core Curriculum is available for download <a href="#">on this page</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Note: Click on the "Procurement and Pricing for Virginia Literacy Act K-5 Core Curriculum Approved by the Board of Education, December 2023" once on the page.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● <a href="#">Virginia Literacy Act Implementation Playbook</a></li> </ul>

### Addendum: Supplemental and Intervention Program Adoption

- Guides that are very similar to the [Approved Core Instructional Program Guide \(2023\)](#) will be created and released in conjunction with the approved supplemental and intervention lists with information about each program that will inform your decision making. There will be one guide released for Supplemental Programs, and another guide released for Intervention Programs that are approved.

- The guides will detail program strengths, program challenges, and the bottom line (just like in the Core guide).
- Much of the guidance and the resources included in this document will also apply to your supplemental/intervention selection process.
- Note: Secondary (6-12) English Language Arts textbooks will be reviewed and presented to the Board of Education for inclusion on the approved textbook list during the 2024-2025 academic year.

## Appendix A

### Sample Criteria, Guiding Questions, and Thought Processes for HQIM (High-Quality Instructional Materials) Selection

SAMPLE HQIM Criteria/Priorities	Guiding Questions to Consider	SAMPLE Thought Processes
<b>Texts and Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do we want to be true about the texts that are included in the HQIM?</li> <li>● What do we want to be true about the topics students build knowledge about as they progress through the HQIM?</li> </ul>	<p>“We heard from stakeholders that giving students opportunities to engage with authentic trade books was highly important to teachers and families, so we want to be sure that this is a component of the program we selected (instead of only abbreviated texts or anthologies).</p> <p>“It’s important for our students to read texts that act as “mirrors” (relatable and relevant to lived experiences) and as “windows” (reflective of new or unfamiliar experiences, ideas) for our students, so we want to prioritize that in our search.”</p>
<b>Special Populations</b> <i>(Gifted Learners, English Learners, and Students with Disabilities)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do we know about our students who have additional needs that should inform our HQIM selection?</li> <li>● Are there particular program components we should prioritize in our search based on the varied student needs that are in each classroom?</li> </ul>	<p>“Many students in our division are English Learners (ELs) so we need to ensure that the program we select has ample language and vocabulary scaffolds embedded and clearly addresses the needs of this population.”</p> <p>“__% of our students with disabilities will require intensive interventions for reading; how will the core program we select meet these needs and what additional interventions or supplemental program will be needed.”</p>
<b>Teacher Readiness and Buy-In</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are our division’s and teachers’ instructional values (<i>e.g. collaboration, student-centered learning, etc.</i>)?</li> <li>● What do we know about our teachers’ experience levels that should inform curriculum</li> </ul>	<p>“We have challenges retaining teachers. How does the HQIM provide onboarding and support to help new teachers use the material?”</p>

	<p>selection (e.g. mostly veteran teachers, mostly new, or a mix of both)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What level of “scripting” vs. “open choice” in the unit and lesson guidance best matches our teachers’ levels of expertise?</li> <li>● What aspects of a core curriculum are important to our teachers and could support buy-in?</li> </ul>	<p>“Our teachers value autonomy and have deep content knowledge; a HQIM that feels overly ‘scripted’ might be a barrier to teacher buy-in. For this reason, we want our new HQIM to provide ample guidance about what to teach in units and lessons, but it should also include structured opportunities for teachers to make decisions grounded in the curriculum about how to best support their unique students.”</p>
<p><b>User-Friendly and Comprehensive Materials</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do we want teacher materials to include? Student materials?</li> <li>● How will teachers and students access all of the resources within the HQIM?</li> </ul>	<p>“We want our publisher to be able to provide student consumables that are paper based (e.g. a workbook); this was a request we heard frequently by teachers during our focus groups.”</p> <p>“Sustainability is important to our community; for this reason, teachers would value digital access to their internalization and planning resources instead of paper copies.”</p> <p>“Were the materials easy and user-friendly when teachers completed model lesson planning and practice lesson delivery?”</p>
<p><b>Budget</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is our budget? Consider how this budget will be allocated across core, supplemental, and intervention program adoption.</li> <li>● What supplemental materials (e.g. trade books) are required in order to fully implement the programs we are considering?</li> </ul>	<p>“Our budget is X; we need to ensure the programs we review are within this based on the Board’s approved procurement and <a href="#">pricing guidance</a>.”</p> <p><i>(Note: Click on the "Procurement and Pricing for Virginia Literacy Act K-5 Core Curriculum Approved by the Board of Education, December 2023" link once on the <a href="#">linked page</a>.)</i></p>

## Appendix B

### Customizable Rubric Template for HQIM Selection

**How to use this template:** If your committee decides that you want to leverage a rubric for evaluating products on your short list of HQIM options, you may adapt and customize the below template to meet your needs. Revise the text for your context and add or remove rows based on the number of priorities or criteria you identify. [Access an editable version by clicking here.](#)

Criteria	Meets (2)	Partially Meets (1)	Does Not Meet (0)
Alignment to [Division] Vision	All elements of our division’s literacy vision are clearly present all aspects of the materials. Use of these materials would directly support the realization of our literacy vision.	Some elements of our division’s literacy vision are clearly present, but others may not be as apparent. Use of these materials would likely support us in realizing our literacy vision.	There is minimal or no evidence of important elements of our division literacy vision in the materials.
User-Friendly Materials	Materials are easy to navigate and well-organized. The purpose and location of teacher and student materials are clear.	The purpose or location of some materials is clear in some cases but might require further clarification or training in others.	Materials are very difficult or confusing to navigate. It is unclear where to locate and/or how to use teacher and student materials.
[Insert Division-Specific Criteria or Priority for HQIM]			
[Insert Division-Specific Criteria or Priority for HQIM]			
[Insert Division-Specific Criteria or Priority for HQIM]			



Overall Recommendation	I strongly recommend these materials for adoption.	I recommend these materials for adoption, but with conditions (e.g. we'd need to adopt a supplemental program or provide more training for ___)	I do not recommend these materials for adoption.
<b>Notes &amp; Rationale for Recommendation</b>			

**Appendix C**  
**Sample Detailed ELA HQIM Review Process (Step 3)**

	<b>ELA: Detailed HQIM Review</b>
<b>Look Across the Year</b>	<p>To what extent are the topics, texts, and themes across the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interesting and worthy of deeply exploring to build knowledge</li> <li>● Relevant for our students</li> <li>● Diverse and likely to appeal to a wide range of students</li> </ul>
<b>Look at a Unit</b>	<p>Start with the big picture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The purpose and goal(s) of the unit are clear</li> <li>● The structure and organization of the unit is clear and easy to follow</li> </ul> <p>Examine the assessment(s) of the unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The assessment is high-quality (students engage in meaningful, evidence-based tasks)</li> </ul> <p>Examine the lesson sequence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lessons build in a logical, coherent way towards the unit assessment</li> <li>● Students engage with a variety of meaningful texts and tasks throughout the unit</li> </ul>
<b>Look at 2 Lessons from the Unit</b>	<p>Start with the big picture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The purpose and goal(s) of the lesson are clear</li> <li>● The structure and organization of the lesson is clear and easy to follow</li> <li>● The lesson requires reasonable prep/organization of physical materials</li> </ul> <p>The lesson is designed to support teachers in making the shift towards more student-centered instruction as evidenced by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learning tasks and activities are varied and engaging</li> <li>● Clear and specific strategies and scaffolds are included to support teachers in meeting the needs of all learners, including English Learners, through different phases of the lesson</li> <li>● Students have meaningful collaboration and discussion opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Bottom Line</b>	<p><b>To what extent do you agree with each of the statements below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These materials meet the needs of all of our students.</li> <li>● These materials align with our division’s vision for literacy and priorities for HQIM.</li> <li>● Teachers in our division would be excited to teach with these materials.</li> <li>● These materials are user-friendly.</li> <li>● I would recommend these materials for adoption.</li> </ul>

	Finally, would you have any reservations if these materials were selected for our district?
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## **Appendix D**

### **Sample Protocol: Making a Final Decision (Step 4)**

*Note: This process might be able to be completed in one meeting, or it might require a series of several meetings with more information-gathering in between. Adapt this to meet the needs of your particular division and context.*

1. Each person or group presents out their findings from the program's detailed review. Include the programs' strengths, weaknesses, and unknowns/questions.
2. As a committee, determine if there were any materials that had significantly stronger or weaker overall reviews than others. Possible discussion questions include:
  - Which materials had the strongest reviews? Do any stand out?
  - Which materials had the weakest reviews?
  - Based on the overall ratings and data points:
    - Are there any materials we should rule out?
    - Is there already a clear choice?
    - Are there any programs we need more information about before making a decision, and if so, how/when will we get that information?
3. Eliminate any options that clearly do not meet your criteria. For those programs that remain, discuss additional feedback captured by reviewers:
  - Which of these materials had the strongest evidence of the priorities we identified?
  - What trends do we notice in strengths, limitations and areas of potential concern?
4. Consider the more technical aspects of this decision:
  - What are the estimated one-time vs. recurring costs (and how does this compare to our budget?)
  - What are the technology requirements?
5. Based on all of the information we have at this point, are we ready to make a decision?
  - If yes: What is our recommendation? Why are these the best materials to realize our Instructional Framework?
  - If no: what other information do we need and how will we get it? (e.g. teacher focus groups, additional

information from publishers, identify additional funding, etc.)

6. Come to consensus and make a decision.
  - a. You might choose to cast a vote where each member of the committee indicates their top choice and whether they would have any major reservations about adopting any of the other options on the table before discussing and coming to a consensus.
7. Plan your immediate next steps.
  - a. Make a plan to present your selection to the board and seek official approval for adoption and procurement.
  - b. Identify the key messages you want to share with the broader division community to invest them in your selection and build excitement about the impact use of these materials will have on students.