CPRL Strategy Toolkit
An Evolutionary Learning Approach to HQIM-PL

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Introduction: A Roadmap for Success

Welcome to the Strategy Toolkit: An Evolutionary Learning Approach to Implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Learning, prepared by the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL) at Columbia University. We are excited to share this toolkit with our district partners in Southwest New Mexico to support their teams as they re-engage with their HQIM-PL adoption and implementation strategies.

This toolkit is a continuation of the work we began at our first workshop, New Mexico HQIM-PL Strategy Support, which took place in early March and featured an introduction to the Evolutionary Learning Process and deep-dive into high-quality instructional materials and professional learning (HQIM-PL). While we originally anticipated convening with district teams again in late April for a second workshop, circumstances changed due to the COVID-19 public health crisis and the new demands it placed on school districts. Despite this ever-evolving landscape, HQIM-PL work remains vitally important: for one, instructional materials are even more critical now as teachers lack a physical classroom presence; additionally, having a coherent academic strategy can balance the urgent and unplanned shift to distance learning. All students deserve a high-quality education, and districts that provide coherent HQIM-PL plans in this new educational environment will be placing their students in a position to succeed.

As such, our CPRL team has built this toolkit to make building and implementing an HQIM-PL strategy as customized as possible to districts’ contexts and progress thus far. We have provided three options for navigating this document:

- **First**, we provide a case study of the fictional “O’Keeffe Unified School District” and its journey to build, roll out, and implement its HQIM-PL strategy. We recommend you read this case study if your district would like to begin with a brief example.

- **Second**, we offer a visual representation of the HQIM-PL strategy that provides a big-picture perspective on the process for building and implementing your strategy. Start here if your district finds this approach most helpful.

- **Third**, we include a section devoted to deeper dives into the tools your district can use to build and implement its HQIM-PL strategy. If your district is ready to use these tools, head directly to Step by Step: Building and Implementing Your HQIM-PL Strategy. This section concludes with some helpful resources to support your work.

Your district may not need to engage with every section of this toolkit sequentially or all in one go. Instead, we suggest that you access the various resources in the way that best fits your district’s needs. However you choose to use this document, we hope it will help your district build and implement an effective HQIM-PL strategy.

Thank you all for your dedication to the academic success of your students!

The CPRL Team
**CPRL Strategy Toolkit:** An Evolutionary Learning Approach to Implementing HQIM-PL

**Fictional Case Study: O'Keeffe Unified School District**

**Part I: Background**

O'Keeffe Unified School District (O'Keeffe) is located in Southwest New Mexico, not far from New Mexico's Southwest Regional Education Cooperative. The district is home to six schools: three elementary, two middle, and one high. These six schools together serve approximately 800 students. O'Keeffe is demographically diverse, with 60% of students identifying as Latino, 35% identifying as white, 4% identifying as Native American, and the remaining 1% identifying as "other." Approximately 25% of the students identify as English-language learners, most of whom speak Spanish as their primary language. Close to 18% of the students are in special education programs and have individualized education plans; 75% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Two years ago, school districts across New Mexico engaged in a math curriculum adoption in accordance with the statewide curriculum adoption schedule. O'Keeffe did its best to adopt and implement a new math curriculum. The district’s superintendent, assistant superintendent, and six principals held a number of remote meetings and convened twice in person to discuss which curriculum to adopt. They chose the “Generic Learning” math curriculum from the Adopted Multiple List, purchased the materials for the schools, and designed an in-house professional learning monthly series to support their chosen curriculum. O'Keeffe also created a rough outline for its strategy building and implementation processes that it planned to use during the school year.

Ultimately, O'Keeffe's math implementation last year was adequate, but it did not meet O'Keeffe’s expectations. Based on data collected last year from classroom observations and end-of-year interviews with teachers, the six principals and district’s leaders learned that a number of teachers could have benefitted from additional training and support in teaching the math content with grade-level rigor. As a result, O'Keeffe’s leadership decided to shift its focus for the upcoming year, choosing to place additional emphasis on professional learning for teachers that would focus on math content knowledge in order to help teachers become more proficient in their delivery of the new content to students.

**Part II: This Year**

This year O'Keeffe has organized its effort, convening a team consisting of a wide range of district stakeholders—its superintendent, special education coordinator, and lead academic officer, along with a middle school principal, a math teacher, and a school-based instructional coach—to engage in the strategy-building and implementation work. The team’s diverse composition is a testament to O'Keeffe’s commitment to stakeholder engagement—the district has made it a priority to incorporate the perspectives of those closest to the work throughout its entire process. O'Keeffe has planned to include stakeholders in its strategy development to ensure that its strategy is as sound as possible, taking particular care to plan for the needs of the district’s marginalized students. The district has also committed to soliciting stakeholder feedback throughout the academic year and to cultivating an environment that encourages stakeholders to share feedback (both formally and informally) about the strategy with school and district leaders.

The district team’s goal is to ensure that schools provide teachers with high-quality professional learning so that they have the training and confidence to deliver high-quality instruction to their students. In order to solicit support and guidance in realizing its goal, O'Keeffe has been in regular contact with the New Mexico Public Education Department’s Instructional Materials Bureau (IMB). As part of this dialogue, the IMB invited the district to participate in a set of workshops with CPRL designed to develop and strengthen district strategies for upcoming HQIM-PL initiatives, create systems for measuring and monitoring the implementation and outcomes of those strategies, and practice using multi-stakeholder problem-solving processes to develop local, responsive solutions to existing or likely challenges. O'Keeffe attended the first workshop in early March, to which its team brought a draft strategy outline and began to map its strategy in greater detail. During the workshop, the district team built a Theory of Action (TOA) and Operationalized Theory of Action (OPTA) to ground its new strategy for implementing professional learning for its math curriculum.

After building its TOA and OPTA in the first workshop, O'Keeffe began preparing to implement its strategy with its focus on professional learning for math content knowledge. To ensure that the implementation of its strategy would be effective, the district needed a way to track the progress of its plan. Therefore, O'Keeffe moved to the next step in its strategy development:
designing a measurement framework that would allow the district to determine whether its implementation strategy for professional learning was being executed effectively and on schedule. O’Keeffe generated a set of strategy-aligned measures related to the implementation of professional learning and then established targets for these measures; it ensured that these targets were supported by research-backed benchmarks. If O’Keeffe’s strategy was meeting and/or surpassing these targets, the district would have confidence that its strategy was being implemented successfully. If parts of O’Keeffe’s strategy were not meeting these targets, the district would have useful information about what wasn’t working and therefore would be equipped to improve the strategy.

Once O’Keeffe had designed its measurement framework, it began to implement its strategy. As the HQIM-PL Strategy Team observed the implementation progress, the team realized that the district was struggling to meet some of the targets it had established. Specifically, classroom observations revealed that the teachers were not equipped with the content knowledge to teach the new rigorous material. To address this issue, O’Keeffe engaged in a series of problem-solving exercises to identify the root causes, generate ideas for addressing the issue, and test the ideas as solutions. Through this process, O’Keeffe identified the root problem: while the professional learning that O’Keeffe had employed had helped teachers become familiar with the instructional materials at a high level, it did not provide teachers with the content knowledge needed to teach the high rigor grade level content.

O’Keeffe brainstormed a list of ways to address this problem and narrowed its focus to the most promising idea for a first improvement effort. The district decided that it would revamp the existing math professional learning community (PLC) in one of the district’s middle schools (Enchantment Middle School) to increase its frequency and protect more structured time to train teachers on the requisite content knowledge for their lessons. The district proceeded to test its plan: for the next three months, it conducted weekly PLCs in Enchantment that focused on content knowledge and strategies to teach rigorous material. Instructional coaches led the PLCs, training teachers on the requisite content knowledge needed for the new math curriculum. After the first month, the district’s classroom observations in Enchantment showed that 60% of teachers were employing the strategies from professional learning sessions in their lessons, an increase from the 40% of teachers that had been employing the strategies before O’Keeffe had enacted its plan. Given this data, O’Keeffe decided to continue the PLCs for two more months, as originally planned. At the end of the three month period, 80% of Enchantment’s math teachers were consistently using the math curriculum in their classrooms and displaying high mastery of the math knowledge, which surpassed the district-wide target. These outcomes led the HQIM-PL Strategy team to decide to adopt the strategy more broadly.

Equipped with learning from its problem-solving process, O’Keeffe was prepared to act on and spread learning. First, the district acted: it started an initiative across the other five district schools to reconfigure those schools’ PLCs to provide more structured time for teachers to receive training on critical content knowledge for the new material. O’Keeffe revised its OPTA and measurement framework accordingly, attaching targets to ensure that it could track the progress of its revised plan. All PLCs then convened throughout the academic year using and tracking this new approach.

Then, O’Keeffe spread its learning within the school district to inform its high school English language arts curriculum adoption and implementation the following year. Given how the revamped PLCs had been successful in building teachers’ ability to deliver the new math content, O’Keeffe adjusted the way its high school (Adobe High School) planned for ELA curriculum-aligned professional learning from the beginning of its strategic planning. As part of this, the math planning team highlighted for the ELA planning team how its strategy had been effective, sharing that teachers had benefited greatly from having time in their PLCs to discuss and learn critical content knowledge and strategies.

Heading into the next academic year, O’Keeffe’s HQIM-PL Strategy team is confident that it will be able to apply this PLC plan in other contexts so that teachers district-wide will apply lessons from professional learning sessions to implement HQIM in their classrooms.

Final Remarks
Your district’s work with HQIM-PL will not be identical to the work in O’Keeffe Unified School District. However, as your district builds and implements its own strategy, you may find it helpful to follow the steps in the Evolutionary Learning Cycle that O’Keeffe followed in the above scenario.
Visual Representation of the HQIM-PL Strategy Cycle

Figure 1: Evolutionary Learning Cycle for HQIM-PL Strategy

- **START HERE**
  - Assemble your HQIM-PL Strategy team and figure out how you will work together

- **Organize Your Effort**
  - Build a hypothesis about how specific steps lead to desired results
  - Then build a plan that includes inputs and actions that lead toward your desired impact

- **Map System and Strategy**
  - Design measures and tools that map to your strategy so you know if you are achieving the desired outcomes

- **Define Measurement Framework**
  - Put your plan into action and track its progress

- **Implement and Observe**
  - When something does not go as planned, use tools to understand the issue and test solutions

- **Problem Solve and Improve**
  - Start a new cycle applying what you learned. Improve things that went wrong and expand your new ideas to other schools, grades or challenges

- **Act On and Spread Learning**
  - Involve key stakeholders throughout the process, soliciting ideas and feedback from those closest to the core
O’Keeffe Unified School District Sample Process

In this section you will find examples of the tools that O’Keeffe created while deploying its strategy. As a reminder, these examples reflect what a district might create, but they are not a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, they are meant to be illustrative of the choices a district may make in building its strategy. To refresh on O’Keeffe’s planning and implementation process, please revisit the case study above.

Organizing Your Effort

O’Keeffe began its strategic planning process by assembling the team that would be working on its HQIM-PL strategy. The district made sure to include people with decision-making authority as well as people who would be directly responsible for or impacted by the work and who would represent different perspectives. Table 1 provides a summary of the team O’Keeffe built.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Superintendent</td>
<td>Decisionmaker for curriculum, schedules, budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Principal</td>
<td>Supports teachers in curriculum changes and implementation and responsible for student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Coordinator</td>
<td>Oversees programs that provide educational assistance to students with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Academic Officer</td>
<td>Leads teaching and learning support for schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Math Teacher</td>
<td>Directly impacted by curriculum and professional decisions, including responsibility for implementing curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based Instructional Coach</td>
<td>Supports teachers in building content, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholder Engagement

O’Keeffe’s HQIM-PL Strategy Team also built a plan to engage its core stakeholders throughout the design and implementation of its HQIM-PL strategy. At the onset of the strategy-building process, the district formally and informally gathered insights from the school leaders and educators closest to the math curriculum implementation work; this engagement allowed O’Keeffe’s HQIM-PL Strategy team to build a strategy that was informed by the realities of its district context. O’Keeffe continued to gather feedback from these stakeholders as it implemented its strategy, which helped the district understand the true impact of its work, and to correct course when necessary.

Stakeholder engagement is a continuous process that is central to change management work. We urge you to constantly consider the impact your efforts will have on your core stakeholders throughout your strategy and engage people closest to the point of impact and those with the most to gain or lose as you design, implement, and improve your strategy.
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**Mapping a Strategy**

**Theory of Action**

Before implementing its plan, O’Keeffe needed to map its strategy. First, the district outlined its Theory of Action (TOA), a hypothesis for how to achieve its desired goal—improving students’ academic achievement and postsecondary outcomes—through its HQIM-PL strategy. A Theory of Action (TOA) is a working hypothesis that articulates how a set of specified actions will lead to desired short and long-term results. Figure 2 contains the Theory of Action that O’Keeffe built with the CPRL team during the HQIM-PL Workshop in March.

![Figure 2: District O’Keeffe Theory of Action](image)

**Operationalized Theory of Action**

After building a TOA to capture its HQIM-PL implementation strategy more broadly, O’Keeffe needed to make clear what it would need to do in order to carry out the work described in the TOA. To accomplish this, O’Keeffe worked from its TOA to build an aligned Operationalized Theory of Action (OPTA), a series of inputs, actions, and outcomes that broke down the TOA into measurable steps that progressed toward the district’s desired impact. This example zooms in on one portion of O’Keeffe’s OPTA. In order to highlight the professional learning component of O’Keeffe’s plan emphasized in the case study above, we are focusing this example on the district’s second “if” TOA statement (if O’Keeffe facilitates and provides the resources needed for ongoing curriculum-aligned, job-embedded professional learning). Figure 3 contains this excerpt.
Measuring the Strategy

Measurement Framework

Once O’Keeffe had outlined its strategy (as described in the OPTA), it needed a way to track the progress of various parts of its plan. To accomplish this, O’Keeffe designed a measurement framework that would allow the district to determine whether its implementation strategy for improved math professional learning was being executed, on schedule, and effectively. O’Keeffe’s resulting measurement framework consisted of a set of measures, tools, and targets designed to provide information about O’Keeffe’s intended inputs, actions, outcomes, and impacts anticipated in the OPTA. Table 2 contains an excerpt from O’Keeffe’s measurement framework that tracks the effectiveness of the district’s implementation strategy for math professional learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTA elements</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input: Dedicated time in yearly schedule to conduct ongoing PL sessions.</td>
<td>Existence of system for tracking frequency of PL</td>
<td>PL tracker that includes instructional support</td>
<td>PL tracker created by August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of PL sessions provided for</td>
<td>Instructional and learning</td>
<td>8 PL sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTA elements</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Input: Principals, instructional coaches and teachers who hold high expectations for themselves and students.</td>
<td>Principals, instructional coaches, and teachers report that their students can learn the new materials</td>
<td>School-based surveys</td>
<td>95% of school-based educators say their students can succeed using the new math curriculum in a teacher survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input: Curriculum-aligned classroom observation protocol</td>
<td>Existence and availability of curriculum-aligned classroom observation protocol</td>
<td>Classroom Observation Protocol</td>
<td>Classroom Observation Protocol discussed before the school year with each teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action: Instructional coaches create a scope and sequence for monthly PLC sessions</td>
<td># of PLC meetings</td>
<td>PL Tracker</td>
<td>1 PLC a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action: Using classroom observation protocol, conduct observation-debrief cycles with teachers every other month</td>
<td>Quality of PLC sessions</td>
<td>Classroom Observations</td>
<td>75% of teachers use strategies from PLCs in lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: Teachers are using the strategies and demonstrating grade level math content knowledge in lessons</td>
<td>% of teachers teaching grade-level appropriate math content knowledge</td>
<td>Classroom Observation Protocol Notes</td>
<td>90% of teachers displaying grade-level appropriate math content knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementing the Strategy

The HQIM-PL strategy team presented the TOA, OPTA, and measurement framework at staff meetings before the school year began and engaged staff in discussions around implementation and troubleshooting possible challenges.

During the implementation, leadership teams in each of O’Keeffe’s six schools engaged in the actions outlined in the district’s OPTA and monitored the measures from the measurement framework. School leadership teams collected information about the effectiveness of the math content professional learning strategy. The resulting data allowed O’Keeffe’s leadership team to determine whether it was meeting its stated targets.

By October, PLCs had been meeting for three months and instructional coaches had completed a few rounds of low-stakes classroom observations. One trend the O’Keeffe HQIM-PL Strategy Team noticed across classrooms was that only 50% of teachers were using the math content knowledge strategies from the PLCs. O’Keeffe’s target was that 75% of teachers would be using the strategies, so the district was falling short of the target it had anticipated. This trend triggered a problem solving cycle so that the O’Keeffe team could investigate the issue further.
**Problem Solving**

The O’Keeffe team considered this gap between what it had expected to see with respect to content knowledge and what it was actually observing play out in practice. The team aimed to develop a responsive improvement to try out, with the goal of course-correcting well in advance of the end of the school year. Thus, the team engaged in a problem-solving cycle, in which it investigated the problem and worked to identify potential solutions.

**The 5-Whys Technique**

First, O’Keeffe employed the 5-Whys process (pictured in Figure 4) to understand the root of the problem. O’Keeffe was able to identify their root cause in 4-Whys.

![Figure 4: District O’Keeffe 5-Whys Exercise](image)

1. **Problem:** Classroom observations have revealed that the percentage of classrooms using the math content knowledge strategies from the PLC sessions was lower than expected.

2. **Why are some teachers using the strategies from the PLC sessions while others are not?** Because some teachers pick up on the material in the PLC sessions quickly while others need more time.

3. **Why do some teachers not pick up on the strategies being taught at the PLC sessions?** Because the PLC sessions do not dedicate enough time to building the math content knowledge.

4. **Why do the PLC sessions not have enough time?** Because the sessions meet monthly and they need to happen more frequently in order to allow teachers more time to learn and practice.

5. **Why do teachers need more time than just monthly?** Because they need to learn math content and practice strategies for how to apply the new content knowledge.

**The PDSA Cycle**

After using the 5-Whys Technique to determine the root cause of the problem, identified as needing an increased frequency in PLCs, O’Keeffe’s HQIM-PL Strategy team began brainstorming solutions. The team determined the solution it would test: it would increase the frequency of the PLCs and provide more structured time to train teachers on math content knowledge. To enact a rapid-cycle test to determine quickly if this solution was responsive to the issue, O’Keeffe used a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle with one PLC group over the course of following three months, November to January.
**Act On and Spread Learning**

By February, O’Keeffe had been implementing its strategy for six months, including three in which it had used a PDSA cycle to try out an improvement based on early outcomes. The lessons that emerged from the PDSA cycle were then shared with the rest of the school and the remaining five schools’ leadership teams, particularly with the high school, which was preparing for its ELA adoption the following year. O’Keeffe spread its learning so that its experiences would eventually help build better practice across schools and subjects.
### O’Keeffe Unified School District: 2020 Math Implementation Calendar

After adopting and implementing its new math curriculum during the previous school year, O’Keeffe developed a concerted implementation strategy and then implemented and improved it during the following year. This calendar lays out the activities the O’Keeffe team engaged in over the course of 2020 to build, strengthen, monitor, and refine their HQIM-PL strategy.

**Table 3: O’Keeffe’s Math Implementation Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan the big picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The superintendent forms a six-member team from its schools and district staff, making sure the team includes diverse perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team meets to build its strategy, creating a TOA and OPTA to detail out and communicate its high-level plans goals for the coming year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team communicates with the math teachers and parents of the school describing its plan for next year’s implementation of the new math curriculum, asking for and incorporating feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team adjusts its TOA and OPTA based on feedback from parents and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team creates a measurement framework to establish how it will measure and track the progress of its strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gather resources and schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team schedules and plans meetings for teachers, principals, and coaches to review needs for professional learning (PL) options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team engages the math department to gather feedback on PL needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team collects and synthesizes all the feedback from these meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- By the end of the meeting, the district decides the PL will be developed in house by the instructional coaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The instructional coaches meet to devise a scope and sequence for the monthly PL sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Schools schedule PL sessions for August with a focus on curriculum reorientation and introduction to PL series</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implement and Collect Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summer PL trainings begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Schools hold monthly PL sessions aligned with the new materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Schools begin the monthly PL sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instructional coaches begin observation-debrief cycles with teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Schools continue to hold PL sessions monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instructional coaches continue observation-debrief sessions with teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● The team identifies the problem it needs to address. To get to the root cause, the team engages in a “5 Whys” exercise. The team decides to recommend PLC sessions that target teacher techniques to improve math instruction.</td>
<td>● The team meets to discuss preliminary results from the PDSA rapid cycle test and see progress. The team is encouraged and decides to continue the test for another month.</td>
<td>● PDSA results in increased frequency of PLCs from monthly to weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Enchanted School engages in a PDSA cycle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>● HQIM-PL Strategy team decides to spread the PLC strategy across the school and district for math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● The Superintendent begins to assemble a team for the Language Arts curriculum adoption in 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● HQIM-PL process begins for HS ELA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step by Step: Building and Implementing Your HQIM-PL Strategy
**CPRL Strategy Toolkit:** An Evolutionary Learning Approach to Implementing HQIM-PL

This section will cover a step by step approach to using the Evolutionary Learning Cycle as you design and implement your HQIM-PL strategy. In our March 2020 Institute, we covered the first few sections of the Cycle: **Organizing Your Effort** and **Mapping Your System and Strategy**. The new material picks up at **Measuring Your Strategy** on page 24 and beyond.

**Organize Your Effort**

The first step towards implementing a successful HQIM-PL strategy is recruiting a well-designed team.

**Criteria for Effective Team Composition**

- **Multiple, diverse perspectives**: Make sure that the wide array of stakeholders who will ultimately be responsible for implementing your strategy are represented on your team. Also, include those stakeholders that are most impacted by the strategy.
- **Expertise**: Ensure that your team collectively possesses the expertise needed to design and implement your strategy. Often, this means school leaders, teachers, and instructional coaches, as well as individuals who work in special education or with English-language learners.
- **Access to necessary resources**: include team members who can offer dedicated time, funding, and connections to critical relationships.
- **Authority**: Ensure that your team possesses the authority to make decisions and approve necessary steps.

Once established, the team should:

- Create working norms
- Map its stakeholders (see page 33)

**Creating Clear, Customized Norms**

Group norms are guidelines for interpersonal interactions that provide structure and conformity for group actions and operation; these guidelines ensure the team’s success.

Some aspects of teamwork to consider while creating norms include:

- **Purpose**: Be clear on what your team is charged to do and make sure that everyone on the team is aligned with this goal. As you work towards that responsibility, determine how you will keep the quality of students’ instruction at the forefront of the team’s work.
- **Communication**: Define how you will share ideas, listen to each other, encourage productive and respectful conversations, and engage when you are not in person.
- **Engagement**: Establish how you will ensure equity of voice and share the work.
- **Decision-making**: Create a process for how the team will make decisions (e.g., by one leader, democratically, by consensus). Consider how you will solicit and include input from stakeholders who are not represented on the team.
- **Documentation**: Decide how you will track the team’s progress and work.
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**Map System and Strategy**

Mapping a strategy will allow your team to clarify its goals and the steps it needs to take to achieve them. This section details two tools that will help your team solidify its objectives and determine the necessary actions: the Theory of Action (TOA) and Operationalized Theory of Action (OPTA).

**Theory of Action**

**Overview**

A Theory of Action (TOA) is a working hypothesis that articulates how a set of specified actions will lead to desired short and long-term results. It is often written as an “if-then-as a result” statement:

“If we do X, then Y will occur. As a result, we will achieve desired impact Z.”

An organization’s TOA represents its core work and should be aligned with the organization’s mission, vision, and values. The TOA can be used at all levels of an organization and for specific initiatives.

**TOA Components**

- “If” statements: high-level actions that form the basis of your working hypothesis
- “Then” statements: short-term outcomes expected to occur as a result of your high-level actions
- “As a result” statement: a north star—the longer term, ultimate goal of your work

These components are pictured in Figure 6. A blank template is located in this Google folder for your team’s use.
Criteria for a Strong TOA

- The linkages between the "if," "then," and "as a result" statements are logical and clear.
- The described work is feasible given the organization’s resources and context.
- The TOA is inspirational and is likely to motivate the organization to dive into the work and sustain its efforts.

How to Draft a Theory of Action

1. Work backwards: draft the “as a result” statement first.
   - **Consider:** does your team or organization have an ultimate goal toward which all of your work leads?
   - Starting here ensures that the TOA is focused on achieving your organization’s main goal(s).

2. Draft the “then” statements.
   - **Consider:** what long-term goals does your team aim to accomplish as a result of the initiative? How do these goals align with your desired result?
   - Create an exhaustive list of all of the goals.
   - Sort those goals by theme or category.
   - Write a summary statement for each theme or category of goals.

3. Draft the “if” statements.
   - **Consider:** what actions does your team need to carry out to accomplish its “then” statements?
   - Create an exhaustive list of all necessary activities.
   - Sort those activities by theme or category.
   - Write a summary statement for each theme or category of activities.
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- Aim for 3-5 “if” statements: if you have more, your actions may not yet be grouped enough by theme and left as is, it will be hard to see the whole picture.

4. Review the TOA.
   - Make sure the TOA is feasible: Are the “ifs” within reach? If not, how can they be revised?
   - Confirm that the TOA is logical, that the connections between “if” and “then” flow naturally, and that achieving the “then” statements can clearly lead to the desired result.
   - Ensure there is team consensus that the TOA is inspirational.

The TOA in Practice

Figure 7 contains a set of components for a TOA for a district’s HQIM-PL strategy. Your district can pick and choose the options in this sample that best suit your goals. For an example of a TOA that has already chosen its “if” statements (i.e., actions) and is tailored to a specific district context, please refer to the O’Keeffe TOA.
Figure 7: HQIM-PL Theory of Action

If the district...

- Defines and invests key stakeholders in the benefits of HQIM and aligned PL
- Communicates the value of, seeks input on, and builds internal and external stakeholder awareness of the HQIM strategy
- Selects and ensures all teachers have access to HQIM aligned to the Adopted Multiple List and to the resources needed to implement effectively
- Designs and implements a system for distributing new materials and discontinuing use of previous materials
- Facilitates and provides the resources needed for ongoing curriculum-aligned, job-embedded PL
- Builds coherent instructional and learning support systems that create alignment within and across curriculum, content areas, assessment systems, and PL
- Gathers feedback, monitors progress, and makes meaning of the collected information to continuously improve
- Other

Then...

Districts Will:
- Ensure consistency and equity of access to materials across all schools and classrooms
- Effectively problem solve and persist through implementation challenges

Teachers Will:
- Value HQIM and possess the content, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge successfully deliver impactful, grade-level instruction to all students
- Continuously strengthen their practice, delivering increasingly strong HQIM-aligned instruction to all students, particularly those who are traditionally underserved
- Collaboratively generate, implement, and improve upon effective HQIM-aligned instructional strategies

All Students Will:
- Be more engaged in learning
- Demonstrate increased academic achievement and growth

As a result, students will:
- Perform on or above grade level
- Be college and career ready
- Eliminate achievement gaps between student groups
Operationalized Theory of Action

Overview
An Operationalized Theory of Action (OPTA) is a series of inputs, actions, and outcomes that breaks your TOA down into measurable, component steps needed to reach your ultimate goal. The OPTA clarifies how your district will execute its TOA.

OPTA Components
- Inputs: resources, actors, and conditions that must be in place before you can begin implementing your strategy.
- Actions (aligned to the “If” section of TOA): steps you need to take to implement your strategy.
- Outcomes (aligned to the “Then” section of TOA): shorter-term changes that often occur within 1 to 2 years of execution and that will lead to the desired impact (e.g., changes in attitudes, behaviors, actions).
- Impact (aligned to “As a Result” section of TOA): changes you aim to achieve in 3 to 5 years and beyond.

These components are pictured in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Operationalized Theory of Action Format

Criteria for a Strong OPTA
- There is clear alignment between the TOA and OPTA.
- There are logical linkages between the elements of the OPTA.
- The work is feasible, given organizational resources and context.
- All key resources and actions that are expected to lead to desired outcomes are included.

How to Draft an OPTA
1. Start by naming the impacts
   - Consider your district’s long-term goals
   - Starting backwards ensures inputs and actions align to short and long term goals
   - These can be 3-5 year goals
2. Determine the outcomes
   - Outcomes are the interim goals needed to reach the impacts
   - These can be 1-2 year goals
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3. Determine the actions
   - Actions are what you will need to do to achieve the interim goals
   - These should be drafted as verbs

4. Outline the inputs
   - Inputs are the resources you will have and need to have in place to execute those actions
   - Inputs can be people, funding, purchases, resources of any kind
   - Being specific can be helpful for success
   - For resources you do not already have but need, ensure you have a matching action to obtain those resources

5. Review the OPTA
   - Ensure alignment between items across all columns
   - Ensure feasibility given current resources and context

The OPTA in Practice
For an example of an excerpt of an OPTA that is tailored to a specific district context, please refer to O'Keeffe OPTA.
Measuring Your Strategy

Overview
Once your team has determined its strategy, it is ready to develop a measurement plan to evaluate whether your strategy is functioning as intended. By creating and using a measurement framework, your district can monitor the progress of its strategy, from the big picture down to the component parts.

A measurement framework is a set of measures, targets, and tools designed to provide information about how well your intended actions are implemented, and how well those actions produce the outcomes and impacts anticipated in your OPTA.

Measurement Framework Components

- Elements from your OPTA (see page 22): it may not be practical to measure every element from your OPTA. Consider those items about which you know the least and/or are most critical to successful implementation of your strategy. Be sure to include those, so you have the necessary information to assess the quality of your strategy and its implementation.
- Measures: the qualitative and quantitative indicators that show the extent to which and how effectively you are implementing your strategy.
- Tools: the instruments used to collect and analyze data described by your measures.
- Targets: specific measurement predictions or expectations that your district anticipates reaching through implementation of its strategy.

Table 4: Measurement Framework Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements From Your OPTA</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items from your OPTA you choose to measure</td>
<td>The indicators that show you the effectiveness of your strategy and implementation</td>
<td>The instruments used to collect and analyze data regarding your strategy and implementation</td>
<td>The expectations your team has to make sure you are on your way to your longer-term goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to Draft a Measurement Framework

1. Select elements from your OPTA to measure.
   - Include inputs to ensure your team has the resources it needs to implement its strategy.
   - Include actions to track whether you are doing what you planned and with what quality.
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- Include outcomes and impacts to verify whether your actions are having the desired effects in the short- and long-term.

2. Develop measures for each element of your OPTA chosen in step 1.
   - Measures are indicators of whether you are effectively carrying out a step in your Theory of Action & OPTA
   - Each measure will directly correspond to an element from your OPTA. A single element from the OPTA may have more than one measure attached to it.
   - Measures help focus attention on drivers of success and achievement of outcomes. They provide early warning signs if things aren’t going well.
     - Leading indicators provide early warning of whether the strategy is likely to produce the hypothesized results
     - Lagging Indicators tell you whether you have achieved the hypothesized results.
   - Measures should be indicators that are feasible to capture and measure critical information.

3. Establish the tool(s) used for each measure:
   - Tools are instruments used to collect, organize, and analyze data to make evaluative judgments.
   - Examples of tools include surveys, in-person protocols, administrative records, and classroom observations.
   - Often, districts already have existing tools that they can adapt as necessary for the measurement framework.

4. Set targets for each measure.
   - Targets are the levels at which you want your measures to be.
   - Each target should correspond with a particular measure in the measurement framework.
   - Targets should be ambitious, yet also feasible. They may be short- or long-term, depending on the needs of your district.

The Measurement Framework in Practice

For an example of a measurement framework that is tailored to a specific district context, please refer to O’Keeffe Measurement Framework.
Implement Your Strategy

During this phase, your team will put its plan into action. Follow your OPTA to guide your steps, and use the measurement framework to record and track progress.

Organizing the Work: Action Planner

Use an action plan (or another organizational tool with which your team is familiar) to break down actions from your OPTA into smaller tasks, establish due dates, and assign responsibilities for tasks in your strategy -- and then communicate about all three to members of the team. Organizing these responsibilities also presents an opportunity to involve stakeholders in the process. Stakeholders provide critical input and receive important information and updates on the work, helping to build their buy-in for the strategy.

You will find a blank template for an action plan in the Google folder.

Assigning the Work: RACI Matrix

Use a RACI matrix to assign, clarify, and communicate roles and responsibilities for your plan. For each task in your plan, identify:

- Someone **responsible** for the task’s completion.
- Someone **accountable** for the task’s completion. This person may reviews and/or approve the responsible party’s work.
- People the responsible party may **consult**, whose opinions are sought out either because of their experience or expertise or because they will need knowledge for something happening at a different part of the process.
- People the responsible party will **inform** about project content and progress.

Additionally, meet with your team regularly to monitor the implementation process, and review the action planner and the targets in your measurement framework to track the progress of your strategy.
Problem Solve and Improve

Identifying problems is a key feature of continuous learning and improvement. As leaders, coaches, and teachers, we must illuminate problems and be prepared to resolve them in collaboration with our peers and stakeholders.

This section is intended to help you solve problems that arise based on what you observe through the tracking of your measurement framework. The tools below will help your team determine why a component of your strategy is not working and evaluate the potential of new ideas as possible system-wide solutions.

As Figure 9 shows, there are seven phases in the problem solving cycle:

1. **Prioritize Deviations**

   Examine the data you have collected to determine whether there are any large deviations from your expected targets. Problems can arise from different situations:

   a. You might notice that a target you set in your measurement framework is not being met.
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2. **Form Team**

Putting together a team for problem solving can be different from your HQIM-PL Strategy Team. This team should be composed of members that can provide insight on the specific problem to be solved.

3. **Name A Problem to be Solved**

Once you have prioritized deviations, explicitly call out what is not happening or not happening well. This will be the problem the team seeks to solve.

4. **Analyze and Refine the Problem**

Once your team has identified a problem that it needs to solve, examine the problem's potential causes. The tools outlined below (5-Whys Technique and Fishbone Diagram) are designed to serve this purpose. Consider collecting and sharing research and experience across your team to build context and knowledge about the problem and its potential causes. This will ensure your analysis and later development of solutions are grounded in evidence.

**5-Whys Technique**

**Overview**

The 5-Whys technique (Figure 10) is a process used to determine the root cause of a problem. The practice of asking “Why?” multiple times helps your team generate progressively deeper levels of causation, uncover links between seemingly unconnected activities, and ensure you solve for the root cause(s) of the problem rather than for its symptoms.

**How to Employ the 5-Whys Technique**

1. Identify the problem you want to solve.
2. Ask “Why is this happening?”
3. Once you answer your question, continue to ask “Why is this happening?” four more times. Typically, around the fourth or fifth “Why,” teams get to the root cause of the issue.

As you use the 5-Whys technique, you will likely see other causal chains you could pursue; the 5-Whys protocol requires that you adhere to one chain of causally linked answers. While this means that the 5-Whys is often too simplistic to be used in isolation, the technique is still an effective tool for pushing your team’s thinking prior to using other tools, such as the fishbone diagram described next.

To see an example of using the 5-Whys Technique, please refer to the [O’Keeffe example](#). Find a blank template for the 5-Whys technique that your team can use in the [Google folder](#).

**Fishbone Diagram**

**Overview**

Another way to determine the underlying causes of the problem can be to use the Fishbone Diagram (also called a cause-and-effect diagram), shown in Figure 11. The Fishbone Diagram can help your team brainstorm possible causes of the problem it faces and organize those possible causes into useful categories. The Fishbone Diagram can be used in addition to the 5 Whys (allowing you to branch out as the 5 Whys did not) or in its place.
How to Draft a Fishbone Diagram

1. Identify the problem you want to solve:
   - Write the problem you hope to solve at the end of the arrow on the right side of the diagram, as shown in Figure 11.
   - Be as clear and specific as you can about the problem.
   - Avoid defining the problem in terms of a solution (e.g., we need more of something).

2. Brainstorm all possible causes of the problem:
   - Consider using the 5 Whys technique to help your team further explore the underlying causes of the problem.
   - Have individuals or small teams generate ideas on index cards or post-it notes, writing one idea per card.
   - Make sure the causes you articulate are grounded in evidence from external research or your own knowledge of your current system.

3. Organize causes into major categories:
   - Review your brainstorm of the problem and group like items together.
   - Name and write the categories in the boxes as pictured in Figure 11. Common categories often include people, procedures, measurements, materials, equipment or technology, environment, and policies or regulations.

4. Determine sub-causes for each category:
   - Using your team’s index cards from Step 2, identify the sub-causes in each category.
   - Place each sub-cause along the branch of the appropriate category.
   - Note that if a sub-cause relates to more than one category it should be written under each of the relevant categories.

![Figure 11: The Format of a Fishbone Diagram](image)

You will find a blank template for the Fishbone Diagram in the Google folder.

3. Generate Possible Solutions
The first step in generating a solution is to set a goal that the solution will be designed to achieve. This goal can be formulated as an aim statement. After creating an aim statement, the team can generate ideas to help you accomplish your aim.

Aim Statement

An aim statement establishes and clearly states the specific goal for an improvement effort. It answers the question, “What are we trying to accomplish?” The aim statement should clearly specify how much, for whom, and by when. It should meet the criteria of a “SMART” goal.

SMART goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

Brainstorming

With your aim statement in mind, generate possible solutions.

1. Brainstorm ideas: assume there are no limits to what you can do. Take note of all the ideas that are shared.
2. Apply a feasibility filter: eliminate all ideas that are not feasible for any reason (such as available people, time, and financial resources), and keep only those that are doable.
3. Apply a criticality filter: discuss the quality of the ideas. How likely is it that you will reach the goal in your aim statement by using these ideas? Keep only the ideas that are best suited to achieve the aim.

At the end of this phase, your team will have a short list of ideas it can test in order to see which is the best candidate to solve the problem you have identified.

4. Design, Run and Monitor an Experiment

In this phase, your team will use the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle (PDSA Cycle) to test one or more ideas and learn how to solve the problem.

Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle

The four steps of the PDSA cycle, shown in Figure 12, are:

1. **Plan**: Choose an idea, develop a way to test (try out) that idea, develop a way to measure the process and outcome of the idea, and make predictions about the likely effect of implementing the idea.
   - Start by prioritizing among the ideas that passed your feasibility and criticality filters. Select the one that you think will most help accelerate progress toward your aim statement.
   - After you identify the idea to test, you should determine the appropriate scale for the test. Will you use it in one classroom? One grade level? One school?
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- Create an action plan that describes the specific steps that you are going to take during the test and how you will collect the data to answer your questions. This includes developing a measure and identifying the tool to gather the data.
- Make predictions by setting a target in the Plan phase. Don’t feel that you need to reach a certain level of change, but rather do your best to anticipate what will actually happen if your test goes according to your expectations. This will position you to surface differences in assumptions among team members before collecting data or running a test and to know at the end of your test whether the idea has led to the intended result and to.

2. **Do:** Carry out the test and collect data on the implementation and effects of your idea.
   - Follow the steps you laid out in your Plan.
   - Document your observations of how the idea was carried out and what happened as a result. Collect data according to your planned measures and tools set in your measurement framework.

3. **Study:** Consider the data you gathered and compare what actually happened with your predictions.
   - Gather your whole team to collectively discuss and analyze test results. Facilitate meetings where stakeholders collaboratively debrief and collectively make sense of the test implementation and results.

4. **Act:** Based on the results of your test, determine if and how you will modify your idea and implementation process for the next test or for broader or deeper implementation of your idea. Decisions will fall into one of three categories:
   - Adapt: Modify your idea based on your learnings from the Study step and run another test.
   - Adopt: Implement your idea on a wider scale across your system.
   - Abandon: Let go of this idea (noting that you learned valuable information that this promising idea did not actually work in practice) and choose another one for your next test.

Typically, improvement efforts involve a series of rapid tests which, taken together, help you quickly identify, adapt, and scale up new ways of doing things to maximize the likelihood of successful implementation. Further, your rounds of testing should inform your understanding of the problem. With each test, you gain more and more information about the nature of the problem, your overall strategy and aim, and the ideas that might successfully lead to improvement.

To see an example of a rapid test using a PDSA cycle, please refer to the O’Keeffe example. A blank template is located in the Google folder.
Act On and Spread Learning

Evolutionary Learning is a continuous cycle of improvement. Having gone through the EL cycle, it is crucial to use what your team has learned to revisit system mapping and, as necessary, go through the cycle again. As you engage in multiple iterations of the EL cycle, you should spread the knowledge your team has acquired across the various levels of the organization.

Scaling Up and Out

The first iteration of your strategy can serve as a model for further efforts by taking what you have learned from the results in your measurement framework and throughout the problem solving process to evaluate the outcomes of your strategy. Based on what you notice, you will likely identify places, big and small, to make revisions to your strategy.

Once you have refined your strategy, you can begin thinking of how to apply it in larger and/or different contexts—in other words, you can begin scaling your work upward and outward. The goal of scaling is not to exactly replicate what worked during your strategy implementation, since each district or school—indeed, each classroom—is different. Rather, the goal is to apply the lessons learned from the first iterations of your work to those other contexts so that you are not starting from scratch.

Here are some guiding questions to consider before scaling:

- Have you refined your program and identified the successes that make it worth expanding?
- Have your stakeholders bought into your initiative? How will they be impacted by your scaling efforts?
- What resources will you need to scale? How will you make sure your efforts are sustainable?
- What costs and potential obstacles are associated with your effort?
- How will you maximize your impact while minimizing risks?

If answering these questions affirms your intention to scale, develop a plan for how you will do this. One common method for scaling is the train-the-trainer model. This consists of enlisting a group of educators whom you train as experts then position to train their colleagues and spread the initiative. Leading Innovation for Tennessee (LIFT) pilot testing is an example of a train-the-trainer model. (You can read more about this early literacy effort [here](https://example.com).) From the LIFT pilots, we know that initiatives are most successful when there is clear ownership of the work, pilot testers are trained on the material they are testing, teachers are supported throughout the process, and there are feedback cycles to allow for organizational learning.

Empowering Local Problem-Solvers

An integral part of the Evolutionary Learning cycle is communicating ideas outward to empower others to identify and solve their own challenges. However, what and how you communicate may change based on your audience. See the following section, Stakeholder Engagement, for more details.
**Stakeholder Engagement**

A stakeholder is any individual or group with an interest in, an ability to help advance your organization’s improvement, or a person who may be impacted by decision making about this initiative. For HQIM-PL, stakeholders often include students, teachers, school leaders, and parents, but may also extend to curriculum publishers, professional learning providers, the school board, the NMPED, local business owners, and unions.

At each stage of the Evolutionary Learning cycle, you should be engaging your stakeholders. In organizational improvement, this kind of engagement is both outgoing, with the organization distributing information to constituents, and--though often skipped in other models--incoming, with constituents delivering information or ideas to the organization to directly inform its planning and work. Effective stakeholder engagement results in more robust, sustainable strategies, with plans and work that are informed by those best positioned to understand the context and need. It is also vital to building and maintaining relationships with your constituents and demonstrating transparency of your organization, which also helps hold your team accountable for its work.

To determine which groups of stakeholders to engage and when, you can use the following tools.

**Stakeholder Analysis**

The diagrams in Figure 13 will help your team name and visualize your network of stakeholders so that you can plan how and when to engage them in your work. The spectrum in Panel A arranges your stakeholders based on who is closest to the core of your work (i.e. who will be impacted most by your initiative). The grid in Panel B maps your stakeholders according to importance (how much your work will impact each group) and influence (how much authority they have over the work you are doing). Blank templates of both maps can be found in the [Google folder](#).

---

**Figure 13: Stakeholder Mapping Diagrams**

Panel A

The farthest

The closest

Core of the initiative

Panel B

Importance

Influence
### Engagement Platforms

There are a variety of ways to tap into your stakeholder network, both formally and informally. The choice of which platform you use as you engage with your stakeholders depends on the kind of information you want to source from or distribute to your network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Format</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>When to Use</th>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Hall</td>
<td>A large public meeting, often with an open invitation. Works well for the distribution of information Q&amp;A with your district, or for your stakeholders to speak about a topic.</td>
<td>When you want to understand stakeholders’ attitudes about a general topic before the initiative When you want to generate ideas</td>
<td>Who is most likely to attend? Who is being left out? What will participants walk away with? Who will facilitate or present new information? What is the best location and time for attendance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>A guided discussion with a small group of people who make up a representative sample of your stakeholders. Works well for collecting individualized information and engaging multiple individuals in discussion together</td>
<td>When you want to gather information about a specific topic When you want to generate ideas</td>
<td>Who is available to attend? What sample of your constituency do they represent? Who will facilitate the discussion? How do we build trust to gain honest answers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey/questionnaire</td>
<td>A response form for collecting information from your constituents about a specific topic or initiative. Works well for collecting a defined set of information from a large number of people.</td>
<td>When you want to measure the effectiveness of an initiative When you want to find out what stakeholder prioritize among needs</td>
<td>What do we want to learn? How do we frame the questions to gather relevant information? How will the survey/questionnaire be distributed? How will responses be collected, stored, and analyzed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>A one-on-one conversation with one or a very small number of constituents about a specific topic or initiative. Works well for learning large amounts of information from a small number of people.</td>
<td>When you want to learn about one person’s experience with an initiative that may or may not be representative of a larger group</td>
<td>Who will you interview? Does this person/group represent your entire constituency? Who will conduct the interview? How will responses be collected, stored, and analyzed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adapting in Light of COVID-19

The global pandemic has changed the landscape of education, and we recognize that it has also affected your districts’ capacity to engage in HQIM-PL strategy building and implementation. In response to this, we offer a few tips here for adjusting to these new circumstances:

- If you formed a team before the crisis, revisit that organization. Does your team composition need adjustment? Are there any perspectives that you would like to include after seeing this toolkit?
- Consider ways to make virtual meetings more engaging for your team. What virtual tools can you use to meet and carry out your work?
- Review your goals and plans to make sure they are still feasible. Remember, goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- Consider incorporating COVID contingencies into your goals and plans (e.g., “teachers adapt to new learning environments” as a short-term goal).
- Use the problem-solving cycle and tools to brainstorm responses to new challenges brought on by the pandemic.
- Stakeholder engagement is as important as ever in the midst of COVID—keep your stakeholders updated frequently about your change work to provide reassurance and motivation.
- As you think about reentering schools, consider these questions:
  - How do we center our planning around our most instructionally vulnerable students?
  - How do we devote extra attention to all students’ emotional needs and unfinished learning?
  - How do we plan to advance and preserve student learning across multiple instructional scenarios?
- For future instructional materials, consider choosing materials that have online tools and resources in the event distance learning is required in future instances.

NM DASH (Data, Accountability, Sustainability, and High Achievement) Connections

DASH is required action planning that all schools in NM need to complete. It is a web-based Process Management Tool. It focuses on 4 pillars for improving student achievement: leadership, instructional infrastructure, support and accountability, and talent management. Schools need to present 90-day and annual plans, which include 5 components. Here are ways in which this toolkit can provide helpful tools for creating this NM DASH plan.

1. Build School Core Team (See Organize Your Effort on page 16)
2. Analyze Data, Identify Performance Challenge(s) and Set Student Achievement Goals (See Measuring Your Strategy on page 23)
3. Prioritize Performance Challenge(s), Conduct Root Cause Analysis, and Select Focus Areas (See Problem Solve and Improve on page 26)
4. Create Desired Outcomes, Define Critical Actions, and Develop Progress Indicators (See Map Your Strategy on page 17)
5. Implement Plan and Monitor Progress (See Implement Your Strategy on page 25)

Notes about alignment between NM DASH and this Toolkit:
- Since DASH is an action planning tool, you can use it as an alternative to the action planning template that we offer for the implementation stage of the EL cycle.
- The DASH guide includes a feedback rubric with specific quality indicators of the components of the plans that the schools need to meet in order to be approved. Follow those indicators for your DASH plan.
Additional Resources to Support Your Work

Here you can find a list of resources that can be useful for the different sections of your HQIM-PL strategy.

Articles on the importance and effectiveness of HQIM

- Center for American Progress Study — spending on HQIM is 40 times more cost effective than reducing class size.
- Mathematica Study — the best curriculum is not always the most expensive one
- Harvard Study — curriculum adoption works best with more professional learning, classroom observations with feedback aligned to the common core and with the inclusion of common core student-outcomes in teacher evaluations.

Resources to Identify HQIM

Unsurprisingly, high quality means different things depending on the topic, and many people disagree on exactly what is most important. That said, here are some useful links:

- NMPED says that HQIM is content-rich, fully accessible, culturally relevant, free of bias, research-based, standard aligned and has clear purpose, structure and pacing.
- EdReports is a widely respected NGO and has detailed rubrics for how to decide if materials are high quality given the topic area.
- New Mexico PED chooses materials by how well they align to the standards outlined here.
- Louisiana’s PED categorizes the materials in three levels according to their rubric. You can find everything on their website.

Sample Tools

- Classroom observation document:
  - Early childhood rubrics from Louisiana.
  - Colorado teacher observation rubrics.
  - U.S. Department of Education guide to build observation systems.
- PLC principles
  - Susanne Owen’s paper on effect of Professional Learning Communities
  - English Teachers and Writing-Based Professional Learning
  - Professional Development in Real Time
  - Peer Observation as Professional Learning

Links to NMPED Resources

- Adopted Multiple List
- Allocation and budget information
- New Mexico Content Standards
- Publisher information and forms needed, this site also includes presentations explaining each form.
- Contact information for Instructional Materials Staff