

# Updated High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Review Process

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) is committed to ensuring that every child in the state has access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) that promote quality learning and long-term success for all students. High-quality materials empower educators, support consistent and effective classroom experiences, and foster critical early learning skills in our youngest learners.

## Introducing the Updated Curriculum Review Process

To better support early learning providers in identifying strong curriculum options, ADE is launching a revised curriculum review process. This process draws on national best practices and is designed to ensure that all reviewed curricula:

- Align with the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework
- Reflect current child development research
- Support instructional quality for all students

## Key Features of the Curriculum Review Process

- Focus on [Interim List](#): The first round of reviews will evaluate curricula currently on the interim approved list.
- Evidence-Based Rubric: A robust, research-aligned rubric will guide all reviews.
- Transparency and Support: Review outcomes and supporting evidence will be shared to inform provider decision-making.

Providers submitted curriculum for review through the [Curriculum Review Request Form](#). Based on this review process, an updated list of approved HQIM is anticipated in **Spring 2026**.

Approved curricula will be published in the updated HQIM list and promoted to early childhood education providers statewide as part of ADE's support for instructional excellence.

## Curriculum Review Rubric Overview

Curricula submitted to ADE will be assessed using a comprehensive rubric that evaluates key areas of quality and alignment. The rubric includes the following domains:

### Arkansas Early Childhood Guideline Alignment

- Comprehensive
- Scope and Sequence
- Readily Available

### Child Development, Emotional Support, Instructional Support

- Cognitive Development, Integration of Content, and Research
- Child Development and Health Associated Domains
- Emergent Literacy

- Mathematical Thinking
- Science and Technology, Social Studies, Creativity and Aesthetics

## **Supporting Child Outcomes and Classroom Organization**

- Assessment
- Classroom Organization, Implementation, and Instruction
- Support for All Learners
- Family Support

## **Background and Research**

### **Why High-Quality Instructional Materials Matter**

[Decades of research](#) underscore the profound impact that early childhood education has on a child's long-term academic and life outcomes. Among the most influential elements of early education is the use of HQIM—materials that are intentionally designed, evidence-based, and aligned to developmental standards.

Children learn primarily through rich interactions with teachers and content. Studies show that moving from a low-quality curriculum to a high-quality one can positively influence a child's development in a single year. Sustained exposure to HQIM over multiple years can lead to [lasting academic advantages](#), particularly in foundational domains such as literacy, math, and science.

Yet, too often, educators must piece together instructional materials from the internet and supplemental sources. This approach not only burdens teachers but also leads to inconsistencies in instructional quality. By expanding access to vetted HQIM, ADE aims to reduce this burden and improve the quality of early learning experiences across the state.

### **Better Materials, Better Interactions: Strengthening the Core of Early Learning**

High-quality instructional materials do more than guide daily lessons—they shape the quality of teacher-child interactions, which are the foundation of all learning in early childhood. Well-designed HQIM:

- Prompt teachers to ask open-ended questions
- Encourage meaningful conversations
- Provide opportunities for extended back-and-forth exchanges between educators and children
- Embed responsive strategies that build trust, curiosity, and deeper engagement

Research consistently shows that [high-quality adult-child interactions](#) are one of the strongest predictors of child outcomes across cognitive, language, and social-emotional domains. Materials that scaffold and elevate these interactions help educators move beyond routines and worksheets to rich, individualized learning experiences.

By focusing on HQIM that improve adult-child interactions, Arkansas moves closer to its statewide vision for early learning quality—one where every child, in every classroom, experiences emotionally supportive and instructionally rich engagement with caring adults.

### **The Science of Reading: A Foundation for Literacy Success**

To support the curriculum review process, leaders in Arkansas leveraged the [science of reading](#), a robust body of interdisciplinary research that explains how children learn to read and which instructional strategies are most effective. For early childhood educators, this research provides critical guidance on fostering early language, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

High-quality instructional materials that reflect the science of reading support educators in delivering systematic, explicit, and engaging literacy instruction, setting children on the path to becoming confident and capable readers.