

Three Steps for Successful Curriculum Selection in Katy ISD

 Katy ISD, HOUSTON TX

Katy ISD is a high-achieving school district located outside of Houston, Texas, serving 90,000 students. In the spring of 2022, the district was seeing some literacy success in many of its 45 elementary campuses; however, it was clear that something was missing. It had been three years since the Texas Education Agency (TEA) launched the [Science of Teaching Reading Initiatives](#), and the Katy ISD school board knew that the district's materials did not align with state's science-backed initiatives.

Though Katy ISD leaders agreed they needed to make a change, district leadership knew the journey ahead would bring challenges—especially given that many teachers felt attached to the current materials. It was in this context that the district leveraged funding from the TEA [Strong Foundations Grant](#) to engage Instruction Partners to help facilitate the selection and adoption of a new reading curriculum.

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KAREN MULLER

Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, Katy ISD

Three steps for successful curriculum selection

The way a school or district approaches selecting high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) sets the stage for how leaders, teachers, families, and students think and feel about the materials. With the guidance and facilitation of the Instruction Partners team, Katy ISD followed a clear, intentional, and inclusive selection process with three key steps:

1 Forming a representative selection committee

Creating a selection committee that was representative of the district community was a vital first step toward selection. Celeste Ferranti, ELAR Curriculum Coordinator, explains, “As a team, we wanted to ensure all Katy ISD stakeholders were included in this important process. We ensured principals, instructional coaches, teachers, ESL instructional support specialists, dual language teachers, interventionists, and district leadership were represented in the group.”



The committee was ultimately built of 50 teachers and school and district leaders. When meetings began, the larger group was divided into smaller table groups of varied voices to drive engagement and cross-team collaboration. Though committee participants were initially apprehensive of the assigned seats, Ferranti notes that, by the end of the first meeting, **“We almost felt like a family already. And part of this was because of the community-building activities that Instruction Partners led us through.”**

This intentional grouping of multiple perspectives, curated community-building activities, and rich discussions created the conditions in which committee members felt comfortable to share, learn, and collaboratively work toward a common vision of literacy instruction.



Resources to support this work:

[Selection Team Process and Team Member Criteria](#)



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NANCY BRADLEY

Curriculum Coordinator
Katy ISD

2 Establishing a common vision

Changing materials often requires a fundamental shift in expectations for both teachers and students. Before considering new materials, the Instruction Partners team knew that the committee needed to establish a shared understanding of high-quality literacy instruction to serve as a common starting point.

To work toward this, Instruction Partners facilitated discussions around the importance of holding high expectations for all students, [RLA Research Based Instructional Strategies](#), and Katy ISD student data.

The focused discussions helped committee members consider questions such as:



What does high-quality literacy instruction look like in practice?



Even if a specific school is high achieving, do all students in that school have the same experience and access to high-quality instruction?



What would it take to create equitable learning conditions for all of our students?

Nancy Bradley, Curriculum Coordinator, reflects, **“In building our vision, we did a lot of collective learning, and we had a lot of discoveries that even though we're a really high-performing district, there are still some things that we could work on.”** It was through studying the research, analyzing student achievement data, and having honest conversations, that the committee was able to reach a common understanding of what the district needed when choosing an early literacy curriculum that meets the needs of all students.



Resources to support this work:

[The Opportunity Myth \(TNTP\)](#)

[Key Messages for Maintaining High Expectations for Students](#)



3 Creating a framework for early literacy instruction across the district

Over the span of three meetings, the committee set out to create a literacy framework that could serve as both a tool for evaluating curricula and as a touchstone for the entire district community to return to throughout the implementation process. Karen Muller, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, recalls, “We were really trying to establish, ‘What should literacy look like in Katy ISD now that we’ve looked at our data and we’ve analyzed the research?’”



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The framework and corresponding curriculum rubric were not created in a vacuum. Dr. Stacey Templeton, a Katy ISD Literacy Specialist, points out that **“feedback from our stakeholders was one of the most valuable pieces. We didn’t just create this document as a curriculum instruction team and push it out. Every single committee member drafted this framework.”** Once the new framework was finalized, the committee members spent time norming on the corresponding rubric to ensure consistency in the review process.

Dr. Templeton shares that the new framework **“can be picked up and read by any single person that is connected to Katy family, admin, teachers, instructional coaches, but it speaks to every single person and how we can live out these expectations that we’ve set up. So it really gives us a jumping off point, moving forward for what the future of literacy looks like in Katy ISD.”**

Looking beyond selection, Katy ISD leaders plan to use the framework to inform every step of the implementation process. Bradley points out that the framework is used **“to anchor our thinking on the curriculum and professional development... our literacy framework now is the vehicle that allowed us to communicate everything that we envisioned for literacy in Katy ISD. And this is the tool that we now will be using to base all of our elementary literacy decisions.”**

Looking forward

Using the framework and rubric, the selection committee reached a consensus on the new literacy curriculum in the spring of 2023. Muller reflects on the process, **“It was great to bring in a neutral party. Instruction Partners wasn’t already for or against a specific program. The process needed to be about the learning and what we wanted to bring to our students.”**

Over the following months, the Instruction Partners team worked alongside principals as they studied the new materials, set expectations for classroom instruction, and planned for teacher professional learning.

With a new high-quality literacy program now in place, instructional leaders are focused on implementing strong collaborative planning protocols that strategically support teachers in internalizing units and preparing to teach the new materials.

Visit the [Curriculum Support Guide](#) for more free guidance and resources to support HQIM [selection](#) and [implementation](#).