Stile

The importance of High Quality instructional materials

Providing teachers with rigorous, high quality instructional materials reduces workload and improves student outcomes.

But not all materials are created equal.

Australia is yet to create a centralised quality ratings body for the curriculum materials used in our classrooms, so it falls to individual schools to assess the quality of resources.

This kind of assessment takes time, but research shows it's well worth the attention of school leaders.

Teacher workload is unsustainable

141%

the percentage of contracted hours teachers are working

44%

the percentage of teachers' time spent on lesson planning

up to 41%

the percentage of out-of-field teachers in STEM subjects

35%

the percentage of teachers who intend to leave the profession

89%

the percentage of teachers who cite "workload and coping" as the main reason they plan to leave the profession

Teacher by day, lesson writer by night

High teacher workload is fuelling teacher turnover. The percentage of out-of-field teachers in STEM subjects is climbing, along with the proportion of teachers who are new to the profession.

In addition to their responsibilities of classroom teaching, lesson preparation, feedback, assessment and much more, teachers frequently find themselves needing to write lesson materials in their own time, either from scratch or using online resources of varying quality.

Teachers report spending an average of 7 hours a week searching for instructional materials, and 5 hours creating their own.[1]

References:

1. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2023). National Trends: Teacher Workforce. Retrieved June 17, 2024 from https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/publications-and-data-tools/national-trends-teacher-workforce#nav-pt7b-kf6

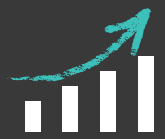
High quality instructional materials save teachers hundreds of hours a year

The research is in and the introduction of high quality instructional materials can have the following impact:

6 hours
saved per teacher per week.

Up to 12%
difference in achievement levels.[1]

7 months
of achievement gap closed for underperforming students.[2]



40 x
more cost effective than reduced class sizes.[3]

The result is improved student outcomes

Comprehensive quality-assured instructional materials offer an evidence-based starting point for teachers, saving hundreds of hours in the creation and curation of lesson plans, classroom activities and assessments. They provide the support graduate teachers need and the flexibility experienced teachers deserve.

That means teachers have more time to spend preparing to deliver lessons that are contextually relevant and responsive to their students' needs and lived experiences.

References:

1. TNTP, The Opportunity Myth (2018). Retrieved from https://tntp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf
2. Agodini, R. et al. (2010). Achievement Effects of Four Early Elementary School Math Curricula: Findings for First and Second Graders. U.S. Department of Education.
3. Boser, U., Chingos, M., & Straus, C. (2015). The Hidden Value of Curriculum Reform: Do States and Districts Receive the Most Bang for Their Curriculum Buck? Center for American Progress.
4. Hunter, J., Haywood, A., & Parkinson, N. (2022). Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools. Grattan Institute.

Not all curriculum materials are created equally

In a randomised control study from the US Department of Education, the provision of different curriculum materials alone resulted in a 9–12 percentage point difference in student results.[1]

Australia is yet to create a centralised quality ratings body for curriculum materials used in our classrooms. That means that the careful attention of school leaders is required to ensure materials used in their classrooms meet the high-quality threshold.

How to select high quality instructional materials

1. **Review your school's current approach**
   Consider the resources you currently purchase and whether they meet the high-quality threshold. Our helpful checklist on the next page will support you in the review process.

2. **Take action to provide teachers with high-quality, comprehensive curriculum materials**
   When resource creation is no longer the teacher's responsibility, they're able to focus on customisation, differentiation, providing feedback and building relationships. All of these things have a measurable impact on student outcomes. If your current resources don't reach the bar, replace them with something that does.

3. **Provide support for implementation**
   School leadership has a significant role to play in the successful implementation of any initiative. Ensure that time and resources are allocated to supporting your staff to upskill in the effective use of the materials you purchase.

Over 50%

of the potential advantages gained from switching to a more comprehensive curriculum are lost if effective training and professional development are not integrated into the transition.[1]

References:

1. Steiner, D., Magee, J., & Jensen, B. (2018). What we teach matters: How quality curriculum improves student outcomes. Johns Hopkins.

So what does high quality look like?

- ✓ Comprehensive, coherent and curriculum-aligned
- ✓ Flexible and fully customisable by teachers
- ✓ Up-to-date real-world, relevant contexts
- ✓ Professional learning that supports effective implementation
- ✓ Supports fast, efficient lesson preparation
- ✓ Evidence-based

Use our checklist!

You can find a digital copy of this list at stileapp.com/go/hqimchecklist, which you can print and use to compare multiple resources.

21 Essential Criteria for High Quality Instructional Materials

Comprehensive, coherent and curriculum-aligned

- [ ] Meets the requirements of the curriculum standards.
- [ ] Provides a coherent sequence of learning that builds student understanding and skills over the course of a year, and between year levels.
- [ ] Includes a wide variety of different activities, including guided class discussions, hands-on activities, research projects and practical activities as well as independent study resources.
- [ ] Includes materials with a rich collection of high-quality supporting videos, simulations and texts, as well as printable materials for device-free learning.
- [ ] Incorporates cross-domain skills such as literacy, numeracy, ethics, digital technologies and critical thinking.
- [ ] Makes wise trade-offs in the depth of curriculum coverage to ensure the program is teachable across a school year, with further depth available through extension activities.
- [ ] Includes a full system of assessment that allows students to demonstrate their capability against the curriculum standards. Assessment system is both summative and formative, with rubrics provided for project work.

Flexible and fully customisable by teachers

- [ ] Offers full editability, allowing teachers and schools to tailor the learning experience to their students' needs.
- [ ] Allows school departments to easily use the provided curriculum resources to build and refine their own customised curriculum, making it the program teachers would build if they had the time.

Up-to-date real-world, relevant contexts

- [ ] Learning is set in real-world contexts and explores phenomena that matter to students. Examples and datasets are recent and kept up-to-date.

Professional learning supports effective implementation

- [ ] Integrated training and professional learning supports teachers to integrate the curriculum materials into their teaching. Over half the benefits of using a comprehensive curriculum resource are lost if teachers don't receive proper professional learning.

Support for fast, efficient lesson preparation

- [ ] Suggested lesson plans include ideas of delivery and differentiation.
- [ ] Comprehensive teaching notes support teachers as they prepare to deliver a lesson, offering guidance on aspects such as incorporating specific teaching strategies, facilitating collaboration, or navigating difficult topics of conversation.

Evidence-based

- [ ] Helps teachers implement specific evidence-based teaching practices from explicit and direct teaching to metacognitive strategies.
- [ ] Explicit and direct teaching: Teachers are provided with materials that support them to clearly show students what to do and how to do it. There are clear learning goals, success metrics, and worked examples that are visible to students.
- [ ] Data-informed teaching: Teachers have access to information about students' performance that supports them in determining their next teaching steps.
- [ ] Timely, specific feedback: Teachers have multiple opportunities and support to provide verbal or written feedback in a timely fashion to improve student performance.
- [ ] Collaborative learning: Teaching and learning activities incorporate opportunities for students to work together in pairs and groups towards a common goal.
- [ ] Multiple, multi-modal exposures: Learning materials offer students a variety of ways to engage with information, including text, images, audio and video.
- [ ] Metacognitive strategies: Students are supported to self-regulate, monitor their own learning, and evaluate their progress.
- [ ] Differentiated teaching and learning: There are opportunities and supports available for teachers to modify teaching and learning to suit students' specific needs.

References:

1. Hattie, J. (2009). Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Milton Park, UK: Routledge.
2. Hunter, J., Haywood, A., & Parkinson, N. (2022). Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools. Grattan Institute.

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Based on real-world science and updated weekly, Stile's modern curriculum supports teachers to explore important global issues and the latest scientific discoveries in their classrooms.

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Swing by the office to say hi!
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Stile HQ is located on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.