

Education Leaders Recognize the Importance of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for Student Success in Math, Yet Significant Barriers Exist

New Gallup study finds only one in four education leaders say their school or district has an official definition of HQIM.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — April 2, 2025 — A [new Gallup study](#), conducted with support from the Gates Foundation, finds that while 83% of education leaders consider designation as a high-quality instructional material (HQIM) important when selecting math curriculum, many are unfamiliar with the term and few schools or districts provide an official definition of quality.

The *Gallup Math Matters Study*, which surveyed over 1,400 education leaders nationwide, reveals that only one in five (20%) education leaders say they are very familiar with HQIM, a term used to define instructional materials that are evidence-based, aligned with standards and otherwise incorporate best practices in pedagogy. Despite limited familiarity, nearly seven in 10 (69%) education leaders believe that most or all their school's math curriculum qualifies as HQIM. For education leaders who report at least some familiarity with HQIM, state guidelines are the top resource used in determining whether a curriculum qualifies (83%).

Education Leaders Lack Common Definition of HQIM

One in four (25%) education leaders report that their school or district has an official definition of HQIM, while another 26% are unsure whether such a definition exists. Familiarity with HQIM varies by grade level and school community income. Principals at elementary schools are more likely to be very familiar with HQIM than those at middle and high schools (25% vs. 17% and 15%, respectively). Education leaders in lower-income districts are more likely to be very familiar with HQIM than their peers in higher-income areas (26% vs. 17%).

Professional Learning for Math Educators Lags Behind Curriculum Needs

The study also finds a misalignment between professional learning for some math educators and the instructional materials they use. While six in 10 (59%) education leaders report that most or all of their school's math-related professional learning is aligned with their curriculum, another 37% report that half or less is aligned.

When considering quality, most education leaders rate their school's math-related professional learning as excellent (11%) or good (48%), but nearly four in 10 (39%) consider it to be fair or poor. High school principals are less likely than their peers at middle and elementary schools to rate their math-related professional learning as excellent or good (50% vs. 68% and 63%, respectively).

"Education leaders recognize the critical role that HQIM and relevant professional learning play in strengthening math education," said Stephanie Marken, senior partner for U.S. research at Gallup. "However, the research highlights persistent challenges in ensuring HQIM are understood and implemented, as well as a need for stronger professional learning opportunities for educators. Addressing these barriers is essential to better equipping teachers to help students succeed in math."

Methodology

The Gallup Math Matters Study, supported by the Gates Foundation, surveyed 1,471 education leaders from across the United States, including 203 superintendents and 1,268 principals. The survey was conducted online from December 2-9, 2024. Results are weighted to reflect national characteristics of schools and districts. The margin of sampling error for education leaders is ± 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

About Gallup

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