2018–19 Implementation of Tier 1 Curriculum

New Orleans’ Instructional Quality Initiative
Dear School Leaders,

Our children deserve to learn from materials that make them curious for more—they deserve to think and learn deeply. They deserve to be prompted to innovate, question, and engage with the big ideas of our world. In short, they deserve the highest-quality curriculum that exists. Our schools are ready to provide it, and our teachers are eager to teach it. Now, it is just a matter of putting all the pieces in place.

This is important work. Our state has adopted more rigorous standards in recent years, and our schools know that excellent, aligned curriculum will help their children meet those standards. To help facilitate this transition, the Louisiana Department of Education identified certain curriculum as “Tier 1,” marking the highest-quality, best-aligned materials available to our schools.

At NSNO, we launched the Instructional Quality Initiative (IQI) to help New Orleans schools adopt and implement Tier 1 curriculum. In the year and a half since IQI launched, we have worked with roughly 50 schools across the city as they have purchased Tier 1 curriculum and begun using it in their classrooms. Now, we take a step back and evaluate the progress schools have made and where we still need to go.

In collaboration with curriculum experts Instruction Partners, we assessed the impact of IQI and came to some important conclusions:

- Schools have made great progress in adopting and beginning to implement Tier 1 curriculum.
- Teachers need more training and support around implementing Tier 1 curriculum as it is intended.
- Vendor partnerships are strongly correlated with student improvement—using Tier 1 curriculum and vendor partnerships was associated with improved LEAP performance for schools.

We know that strong curriculum is just one part of building a great school. There is much that goes into success beyond curriculum, like strong educators, a positive culture, a clear vision, and aligned goals—but we believe curriculum has a measurable impact on student success.

In this document, we dive deeper into our findings from the first full school year of IQI and get to the core of what schools need to take their work to the next level. Join us in examining the power of great curriculum and our high hopes for the impact it will have on our city’s students.

Best,

Patrick Dobard
CEO, New Schools for New Orleans
What are Tier 1 & IQI?

LOUISIANA SHIFTS TO HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Over the past nine years, Louisiana has shifted to more rigorous academic standards and assessments. As a result, there was a need to ensure that curriculum was aligned to the adopted standards.

In 2014, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) began supporting districts with this need by reviewing and rating instructional materials. This process continues today. Of the hundreds of materials reviewed thus far, over 50 have been deemed “Tier 1” curriculum, meaning they are high-quality and fully aligned to the Louisiana Student Standards.

WHY DOES TIER 1 MATTER?

- Research has shown that curriculum is deeply important and can substantially impact student learning, outcomes, and results over time.
- In 2012, the Brookings Institute found that a strong curriculum has a measurable impact on student learning and that the effect may be especially pronounced for certain historically disadvantaged groups. Additional research has shown that access to rigorous coursework increased achievement for Black and Latinx students.

WHAT IS THE INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY INITIATIVE?

In January 2018, New Schools for New Orleans launched the Instructional Quality Initiative (IQI), a partnership with LDOE, NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS), and our local open-enrollment schools. This initiative helps to ensure successful Tier 1 curriculum implementation citywide by providing grant funding and support. Through the Instructional Quality Initiative, NSNO:

- Assists local qualifying charter schools with funding Tier 1 approved curriculum and expert partners, coordinating trainings, and sharing best practices.
- Ensures schools are using curriculum and implementing strategies with fidelity by collaborating with vendor partners.
- Monitors the impact of partnerships and school-level collaborations.

Our theory of action, rooted in research, is that if schools adopt vetted, standards-aligned instructional materials in both ELA and math and skillfully implement them, then students in New Orleans will increase their proficiency of grade-level content and be equipped to achieve the college- and career-ready outcomes to which they aspire.
Tier 1 Adoption Around Louisiana
Adoption: Statewide and New Orleans

Over the past five years, 93% of Louisiana school systems have adopted Tier 1 curriculum. According to the LDOE, curriculum adoption - coupled with aligned assessments and professional development - has resulted in a steady increase in student achievement. Statewide, the percentage of 3rd through 8th graders scoring Mastery and above on LEAP rose from 37% in 2015 to 44% in 2019 in ELA. Similarly, math performance improved from 30% to 34% between 2015 and 2019.

Conversely, New Orleans public schools did not begin adoption in significant numbers until the 2018-19 school year. For the same time period during which the state improved in both ELA and math, New Orleans’ ELA performance has remained at 32%, while math performance has declined from 25% to 24%. However, as of 2019, 85% of schools have now implemented some form of Tier 1 curriculum.

As schools have now moved into the second year of the Instructional Quality Initiative, there is an opportunity to learn from parishes that adopted Tier 1 curriculum before 2018 and that have relatively similar enrollment and/or demographics as New Orleans.
Lessons Learned from Tier 1 Implementation

IMPROVEMENT SINCE 2015

↑11 percentage points
ELA overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

↑10 percentage points
MATH overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

12,000 Total enrollment

74% Student population that is economically disadvantaged

We continue to work on collaboration around effective teaching and student learning. Vendors have helped us from the beginning and we engage with them now more than ever.

Bite the bullet and have them use it with fidelity as soon as you can, and provide support. Go through the struggles and it will pay off. That’s what I would say to anyone wanting to start. We have evolved over time.

Carey Laviolette, Superintendent
Lessons Learned from Tier 1 Implementation

IMPROVEMENT SINCE 2015

↑12 percentage points

ELA overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

↑7 percentage points

MATH overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

22,000 Total enrollment

73% Student population that is economically disadvantaged

There was apprehension with change for sure, but at the end of the day, we had teachers who knew we could be doing better. Once we had teachers wrap their minds around a more holistic approach, it was a true paradigm shift.

In implementation, we did professional development sessions where we would gather teachers by grade level or content areas to do unit roll-outs and gain more familiarity with the curriculum. We tried to allow space for our learning opportunities to evolve with what teachers really needed.

We still use vendors for our content leaders, mentor teachers, and intervention leaders to gain additional expertise.

Jeffrey Powell, Superintendent
Lessons Learned from Tier 1 Implementation

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

41,000 Total enrollment

Student population that is economically disadvantaged

79%

IMPROVEMENT SINCE 2017

↑ 6 percentage points
ELA overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

↑ 4 percentage points
MATH overall improvement in LEAP for grades 3–8

We immediately started engaging with high-quality curriculum vendors—we wanted to ensure educators (leaders and teachers) explored the curricula options. We asked leaders to be adaptive with teachers by allowing them to use professional learning community time for purposeful planning opportunities. We thought the more time teachers and leaders spent digging into the curriculum together, the better that they would do with implementation.

By January of the first year, you could see the tides turning in what was happening in classroom instruction.

We were just persistent, and after that year, we saw results.

Dr. Quentina Timoll, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
National research has similar findings for Tier 1 implementation and ongoing support.

It may take years for instructors to master the shift from one curricular approach to another; in the long run, however, the consistent use of the new curriculum over multiple years of a student’s education could have a major cumulative impact.

*Curriculum Research: What We Know and Where We Need To Go, Standards Work, March 2017*
2018–19 Curriculum Funding & Supports in New Orleans
Bringing Tier 1 to New Orleans

New Orleans schools partnered with LDOE and NSNO to bring additional Tier 1 curriculum in the 2018-19 school year.

LDOE collaborated with NSNO to ensure that as many New Orleans schools as possible were able to:

- Purchase Tier 1 curriculum before the 2018–19 school year.
- Receive implementation supports from expert vendors during the 2018–19 school year.

Together, LDOE and NSNO provided roughly $5 million in funding to New Orleans schools in 2018–19 for Tier 1 curriculum adoption and implementation.

**LDOE**

- Funded all schools identified as “struggling schools” (CIR and UIR).

**NSNO**

- Funded and supported all other schools that were willing to adopt Tier 1 through the Instructional Quality Initiative (IQI).
- Schools and networks decided how to use their funding.

### 2018–19 Tier 1 Implementation in New Orleans

- **57%** NSNO FUNDED & SUPPORTED
- **15%** NON-FUNDED TIER 1
- **13%** NON-TIER 1/UNKNOWN
- **15%** LDOE FUNDED
Tier 1 Curriculum Adoption in New Orleans

As previously mentioned, 93% of Louisiana school systems have implemented Tier 1 curriculum. Here in New Orleans, 85% of schools have implemented some form of Tier 1 curriculum. This shows progress towards our goal of full implementation citywide. See below for progress and implementation over time.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELA CURRICULUM</strong></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MATH CURRICULUM</strong></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VENDOR PARTNERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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2018–19 Takeaways
We identified takeaways for 2018–19 using NSNO IQI data, Instruction Partners’ Curriculum Implementation Review data, and 2019 LEAP proficiency results.

Schools made major progress in adoption and initial implementation.

Teachers have a significant need for more training and support.

Vendor partnerships are strongly correlated with improvement.
Instruction Partners conducted a Curriculum Implementation Review of all New Orleans IQI schools. Highlights of their findings show investment, buy-in, effort, and appropriate grade-level focus.

**INVESTMENT**
Network leaders, school leaders, and teachers are eager to engage students in a rigorous curriculum with materials to support great teaching and learning.

**BUY-IN**
100% of focus group teachers believed that the chosen Tier 1 curriculum will prepare students for college and beyond.

**EFFORT**
In the vast majority of classrooms observed, teachers had curriculum materials present and were attempting to use the curriculum throughout instruction.

**APPROPRIATE GRADE-LEVEL FOCUS**
- 77% of ELA lessons focused on complex texts at or above grade level.
- 87% of MATH lessons focused on concepts aligned with grade-level expectations.

**TAKEAWAY #1**
Schools made progress in adoption and initial implementation.
Teachers have a significant need for more training and support.

TIME is not consistently used in support of curriculum implementation. Many schools reported that teachers lack protected time to engage in professional learning and lesson internalization.

**MATH teachers need support with:**
- Developing a deep understanding of how concepts are connected to previous and future grade levels
- Focusing instruction on concepts instead of ‘how to get the answer’
- Increasing knowledge of strategies that students can use to demonstrate understanding of concepts

**ELA teachers need support with:**
- Internalizing texts
- Pacing lessons and units appropriately to allow students enough time to engage deeply
- Implementing best practices that are less teacher-centered and promote student ownership of learning

*Source: Instruction Partners 2019 IQI Curriculum Implementation Review Report*
Vendor partners are strongly correlated with improvement.

We found a strong correlation between utilizing both a Tier 1 curriculum and a Tier 1 vendor partner and improved LEAP proficiency performance between 2018 and 2019.

IQI schools’ vendor partners included Achievement Network, Instruction Partners, Leading Educators, and TNTP.

A successful vendor partnership can offer a variety of solutions to support CAOs, principals, coaches, and teachers, including:

- Collaborating with school leaders to plan and prepare curriculum-specific professional development and common planning time for teachers and teacher leaders
- Helping school teams develop targeted action plans for academic growth
- Acting as thought partners and on-call experts for all aspects of curriculum and instruction
New Orleans schools made great steps in adoption and implementation over the 2018–19 school year. However, educators will need continuous training and support. Incorporating a vendor partnership to provide additional support to teachers and leaders is strongly correlated with improvement.

This step was critical in order to see the benefits of teacher buy-in, Tier 1 implementation, and participation in curriculum hubs.

See p.22 for more info.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School buy-in and change management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoption of Tier 1 curriculum</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support of vendor partner</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing, school-led professional development</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuous monitoring and coaching</td>
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Successful implementation and improved student outcomes
Moving Forward
How NSNO Can Support Your School

NSNO is committed to helping schools adopt and implement Tier 1 curriculum. For the 2020-21 school year, we are offering support in the following ways:

- Providing financial support to partially cover the costs of vendor partnerships
- Connecting schools with national vendor partners
- Creating professional learning communities, curriculum hubs, and summer support opportunities

We would love to hear from you! Please reach out if you have any questions.

In addition, please check out our IQI newsletter to keep up to date on all our supports.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Dr. Jawan Brown-Alexander
Chief Schools Officer
jawan@nsno.org
504-284-0456
Appendix
Our curriculum and support hubs are yearlong communities of practice that allow teachers, instructional coaches, and leaders to learn proven strategies around unpacking and internalizing curriculum. These opportunities, which are led by Tier 1 vendor partners, call for educators to collaborate while receiving ongoing support through continuous cycles of learning, application, and feedback.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018–19</th>
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<th>2020–21</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PREVIOUS HUBS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CURRENT HUBS</strong></td>
<td><strong>PROPOSED HUBS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agile Mind</td>
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<td>Eureka Math</td>
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<td>Wit and Wisdom</td>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>Sp. ed./RTI</td>
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**CONSORTIUMS**

- Agile Mind
- Illustrative Math
- Wit and Wisdom

*Consortiums are hubs that will be organized by the vendor partner instead of NSNO
We found a strong correlation between improved LEAP proficiency and schools that used all of the following:

- Tier 1 ELA curriculum
- Tier 1 math curriculum
- Tier 1 vendor partner
- One or more curriculum hubs led by Tier 1 vendors

**Improvement Correlated to Multiple IQI Supports**

**ELA & Math Combined Mastery and Above, Grades 3–8 Tier 1 ELA Curric. + Tier 1 Math Curric. + Tier 1 Vendor Partner + Hub(s)**
External Resources

Instruction Partners — Curriculum Support Guide

- https://curriculumsupport.org/

Leading Educators — Successful Implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials


TNTP — Opportunity Myth

- https://opportunitymyth.tntp.org/

Key IQI Partner Organizations:

[Images of logos for ANet, School Kit, Great Minds, Leading Educators, Teaching Lab, Instruction Partners, and TNTP reimage teaching]
2018–19 Implementation of Tier 1 Curriculum: New Orleans’ Instructional Quality Initiative

1. What is the Instructional Quality Initiative (IQI)?

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2. What are the most important aspects of the IQI?

We believe curriculum matters, and that adopting a vetted curriculum is important. Similarly, we believe that training teachers to skillfully implement curriculum matters, and that doing so requires content and pedagogical knowledge as well as expertise in practices of adult learning.

3. Why is the IQI important to the New Orleans educational landscape?

Our theory of action, rooted in research, is that if schools adopt vetted, standards-aligned instructional materials in both ELA and math and skillfully implement them, then students in New Orleans will increase their proficiency of grade-level content and be equipped to achieve the college- and career-ready outcomes to which they aspire.

4. Why is it important for schools to partner with a curriculum implementation vendor organization?

In New Orleans, like other urban areas, there is a high rate of student mobility year over year. In addition, teacher retention is a challenge that we are currently working to address. Therefore, a curriculum implementation partner can be the constant lever of support for schools to coach and provide guidance on best instructional practices and systems for successful curriculum implementation.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Instructional Quality Initiative (IQI)?

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5. What are the goals of the IQI?

NSNO’s instructional support strategy is focused on two main areas:

- Making certain that all schools citywide use standards-aligned curriculum, defined as vetted instructional materials that meet LDOE’s Tier 1 bar.
- Making certain that teachers are equipped to skillfully implement aligned curriculum, as measured by vetted progression scales (i.e., LDOE Curriculum Implementation Scale).

6. What are the current three-year priorities for the IQI?

The three-year goal for the Instructional Quality Initiative is to continue to support our schools to utilize high-quality curriculum in English language arts, mathematics, and science. NSNO strives to maintain partnerships with philanthropic organizations in order to support schools financially and systemically.

7. How much funding has been committed to the IQI?

In the past two years, LDOE and NSNO have committed approximately $10 million to support schools through competitive funding (SuperApp), IQI Rounds 1, 2, 3, and 4 grants, and TIF grants.

8. How many New Orleans public schools have adopted Tier 1 curriculum?

Of the 86 public schools in New Orleans in the 2019-2020 school year, we have received communication on curriculum choices from 81 schools. 65% of these schools have adopted a Tier 1 curriculum in English language arts. 76% of schools have adopted a Tier 1 curriculum in mathematics.

9. How many other parishes in Louisiana have adopted Tier 1 curriculum outside of Orleans Parish?

63 of the 68 other public school districts in Louisiana, or 93%, have adopted Tier 1 curriculum in at least one subject or at least one grade band. [The Recovery School District is excluded from this count because curriculum is not standardized across its schools.]

10. How can schools statewide apply for funding to purchase Tier 1 curriculum through the Louisiana Department of Education?

Schools may apply for funding through the SuperApp process, which launches in November. Please contact districtsupport@la.gov with questions.

11. How does NSNO provide support and monitor the implementation of Tier 1 curriculum in IQI schools?

NSNO checks in with leaders and vendor partners, and conducts instructional walkthroughs to ensure that funding for curriculum is utilized as intended.
12. **When will additional rounds of IQI happen?**

As additional funding becomes available, NSNO will provide guidance on opportunities to apply for IQI rounds.

13. **Who should New Orleans leaders contact if they have questions about NSNO’s Instructional Quality Initiative?**

Dr. Jawan Brown-Alexander, Chief of Schools (jawan@nsno.org).