A COMPANION GUIDE

Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool– Quality Review (GIMET-QR)

ELA/Literacy Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool—Quality Review:
www.cgcs.org/resources/academics/gimet-qr

Mathematics Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool—Quality Review:
www.cgcs.org/resources/academics/gimet-qr

Council of the Great City Schools™

Textbooks and materials used in classroom instruction have the ability to support or limit student attainment of grade-level standards. The introduction of new, more rigorous standards, such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or other college- and career-readiness standards, coupled with education budget reductions across the country make the need to carefully assess the alignment and quality of proposed materials more important than ever.

The Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET), released by Student Achievement Partners (www.achievethecore.org), was the first effort to support states, districts, and schools in their endeavors to screen textbooks and materials claiming alignment to the CCSS. For both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, IMET presents non-negotiables, alignment criteria, and indicators of quality to determine if the materials reflect the instructional shifts and major features of the standards. The tool is used to screen materials that span grade-level bands (e.g., K-2 and 3-12 in English language arts, and K-8 and high school in mathematics).

The Council of the Great City Schools recognized the need for an even deeper look at the quality and alignment of materials. The Council's introduction of the Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool – Quality Review (GIMET-QR) enhances the process by providing rubrics for evaluating materials at each grade level. Once the initial IMET screening is complete, the GIMET-QR prompts reviewers to collect evidence of the quality and alignment of grade-level materials. Additionally, it provides a close examination of the quality of teacher support, as well as the tasks that students are asked to complete.

This companion document will provide users with an overview of the GIMET-QR tool within the context of the critical components of any textbook/instructional materials adoption, including reviewer training and calibration. It will then present some other potential uses of the GIMET-QR beyond textbook selection, including assessment of current materials, identification of gaps and omissions in learning progressions, and professional development.

WHAT IS GIMET-QR?

The GIMET-QR is a tool designed as a framework for judging not only the alignment of materials to grade-specific and end-of-year expectations as delineated in the Common Core State Standards and/or college- and career-readiness standards, but the quality of the content and instructional design of materials. The GIMET-QR requires reviewers to cite specific evidence from textbooks and materials rather than relying on the table of contents or the topic headings, and provides greater detail on the criteria by grade level. Reviewers can record and save their evidence directly in the online tool.

The GIMET-QR addresses two content areas – English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Each content area has a unique set of rubrics tailored to address key components and shifts required by the CCSS and college- and career-readiness standards.

Both the GIMET-QR for ELA and mathematics are also attuned to the academic language and vocabulary development needs of English language learners and students with disabilities. The intentional integration of strategies for differentiating instruction for diverse learners is critical. A fine balance is needed to ensure that any scaffolding provided for English learners and students with disabilities does not compromise or undermine access to language-rich activities. Teaching supports must provide multiple entry points for students that allow them to better understand the grade-level standards they are learning. Considerations for these student groups are thus incorporated within the respective rubrics even when they are not explicitly designated as such, and can be useful in determining the quality of instructional materials for all learners.

The Council's *Framework for Raising Expectations and Instructional Rigor for English Language Learners* (ELD 2.0) and the language implications of this framework for each section of the GIMET tool are referenced throughout the document, and active links are provided for further information.

GIMET-QR – ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The GIMET-QR for ELA is designed to help districts judge the quality of the content and instructional design of English language arts and literacy materials that have passed the initial IMET screen for overall alignment to the CCSS. Materials under review are categorized under three areas: non-negotiables, alignment criteria, and quality. The rating scales identify the value judgments to be made, and guiding statements in each section provide the basis for making those judgments.

GIMET-QR for ELA does not attend to *all* grade-level standards, focusing instead on the standards that are most distinctive for that grade level and that establish the depth of knowledge and level of rigor that students will be expected to demonstrate in class and on individual and group assignments. It is important to keep in mind that 'quality' is not defined solely as compliance or alignment to the standards. The characteristics of instructional materials that appeal to users such as style, humor, empathy, drama, and cultural responsiveness should be considered along with the substance (e.g., language arts/literacy content and cognitive demand).

GIMET-QR for ELA is intentionally neutral on the issue of the specific pedagogy to be used during instruction, as teachers are best suited to the task of determining what is most appropriate to meet the instructional needs of their students. However, an important consideration of any instructional material review is the prevalence of tools that will support teachers in the effective delivery of high-quality content. As a part of the GIMET-QR-ELA, critical guiding statements and consideration are given to how the materials assist teachers in developing student knowledge and advancing instructional practice. For example, the materials under review should help teachers develop a deeper understanding of the grade-level knowledge, concepts, and skills they are teaching.

As noted above, the GIMET-QR requires reviewers to rate each criterion based on the evidence cited from the materials corresponding to each of the guiding statements. Committee members do not need to review each of the criteria. Rather, reviewers can be assigned individual sections

to evaluate. Reviewers can then collectively discuss each respective criterion and the corresponding evidence. The information and evidence gathered by each reviewer should be refined through the process of discussion with the larger review committee.

Particular attention is given to the explanations and illustrations that the materials provide to enhance the learning process, as well as the types of assignments and opportunities students have to demonstrate their learning. In the Summary Rating section, reviewers are prompted to cite the strengths and weaknesses of textbooks or instructional materials, and to indicate gaps and omissions that may need to be considered or addressed prior to making a recommendation for purchase.

After the summaries are compared and discussed, there is a Decision Recording Sheet provided for reviewers to capture the entire material review.

GIMET-QR – MATHEMATICS

As with the GIMET-QR for ELA, the GIMET-QR for Mathematics is designed for use as a framework for judging the quality of the content and instructional design of mathematics materials that have been shown to be aligned to the CCSS. Specifically, it is designed to help reviewers identify the extent to which the materials under review promote a balance of the three components of rigor (conceptual understanding, applications, and fluency) along the K-8 progression to algebra continuum. The tool uses some of the Mathematics Progressions from Illustrative Mathematics (https://www.illustrativemathematics.org/progressions) to provide additional specificity and clarity for reviewers.

The GIMET-QR – Mathematics does not address all grade-level standards, focusing instead on those within the progression to algebra continuum. The GIMET-QR operates at a very fine grain size, providing a process for reviewing a smaller set of clusters leading to the grade eight Common Core State Standards. It does look for coherence within a grade when considering the quality of materials and assignments, rather than coherence across grade levels. However, it is not a checklist that fragments the CCSS for math; rather, it deliberately focuses on how well the materials reflect the overall intent of CCSS and college- and career-readiness standards for math proficiency.

The GIMET-QR – Mathematics requires reviewers to make judgments about both the quality of the math textbook/materials as well as the quality of the assignments. The math review committee should use the entire rubric to rate the grade-level material, regularly convening to share and discuss findings and supporting evidence. Together, they should summarize the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and omissions of the materials, and reflect upon this collection of evidence to answer the question, "How well do the materials reflect and support the rigor of CCSS-M?" The rating scales identify the value judgments to be made, and the characteristics of the highest rating – *High Quality/Exciting* – is provided to serve as a benchmark for making those judgments. Evaluation of the overall set of materials takes place after this review and discussion process, so an Adoption Committee Recording sheet is provided at the end.

HOW TO USE THE GIMET-QR

There are several ways the GIMET-QR can be used during the adoption process. At the central office or state level, the IMET from Student Achievement Partners can be used as an initial screen for overall CCSS alignment to reduce the many choices of textbooks and instructional materials. Then the review committee can use the GIMET-QR to further evaluate the remaining selections by grade level. For example, in some states eligible texts/materials are reviewed and vetted at the Department of Education level. A list of state-approved texts/materials are then published for school districts to choose from. The GIMET-QR can be used at the district level to conduct this secondary review of materials for specific grade levels.

Another method is to have curriculum and instruction personnel at the school district level use the IMET to narrow the prospective materials to those which are CCSS-aligned for deeper review by the district adoption committee. This committee could complete the IMET non-negotiable sections and then certain members could take different sections of the IMET to complete the initial screening of potential materials under consideration. District leaders might also contact other districts that have used the IMET in order to identify potential materials for adoption. The textbook/materials that are considered viable for further review would then be evaluated by the district's adoption committee using the GIMET-QR for ELA and/or Math accordingly.

Review committees can also be organized by GIMET Alignment Criteria (ELA) and Cluster Headings (mathematics) within a grade rather than looking at all criteria at once. This would allow time for reviewers to focus more intently on collecting the kind of evidence that will inform the rating of materials.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE GIMET-QR REVIEW PROCESS

Planning for the Adoption Year

Prior to the adoption year, it is recommended that districts review and update adoption rules, policies, and procedures as necessary to reflect a more in-depth approach to the review of textbooks/materials. Critical to this process is the examination of student achievement data in the core content areas across grade levels and student groups to determine any areas where trends indicate a need for support and stronger instructional guidance.

It is also critical to balance the amount of professional development (PD) that is required to adopt and implement various instructional materials with the reality of what can be delivered and budgeted. For example, a specific textbook series may be an excellent fit for a district, but the effort to implement it could create a hardship for the district based on the lack of PD funds and/or coaches to provide training. Moreover, while successful implementation may require access to all teachers, it may simply not be feasible.

However, this does not necessarily mean that high-quality materials that require extensive training should be eliminated. It does mean the district should proactively plan the roll-out of the materials in order to address these needs and mitigate any potential challenges. Alternatively, PD plans can include coaches and other school-based leaders, as well as cross-functional teams that can provide PD and ensure strong support for implementation. These considerations should be addressed during the review process to ensure a successful adoption.

Selection of the Adoption Committee

The selection of adoption committee members is the first and most critical step in the review process. Careful consideration must be given to the selection of reviewers that offer wide and varied instructional expertise and are well grounded in their knowledge of CCSS or the college- and career-readiness standards for their state.

With this in mind, it is important to include reviewers with content knowledge and expertise in the specific grade-level standards under review. For example, if a K-2 adoption is being considered, teachers from each grade level should be represented on the adoption committee. Intentional consideration should also be made to ensure materials are vertically aligned. Therefore, in a K-2 adoption, Pre-K as well as grade three teachers should be included to ensure a thorough pathway of standards and instruction from grade level to grade level. The GIMET-QR provides for this important practice of within grade and across grade review, discussion, and collaboration in selecting textbooks/instructional materials.

Key partners also include teachers that are representative of the student population, including English learners, students with disabilities, diverse ethnicities, and advanced learners. It may also be important to ensure that committee members represent the geographic regions/ areas of the district. Finally, including parents in the adoption process may be both helpful and informative, especially for the adoption of materials which support the home and school connection.

Training and Calibration on the GIMET-QR and Adoption Process

A recent survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools (2014) revealed wide variation in training on scoring and calibration for reviewers prior to the adoption process. The process of reviewing materials using the GIMET-QR must begin with intentional training and practice using the tool.

For example, one of the requirements for quantifying the quality of the materials is citing and documenting evidence that indicates to what extent the materials meet grade-level standards. It is truly a different way to review materials for use. Therefore, it is critical that sufficient time is given to reviewers to explore the tool together and discuss each section. This allows them to calibrate and reach consensus ahead of time about what they are looking for, what is valid evidence, and why those features are important. The team should also discuss the rating scale from GIME-QR Math Appendix A.

USES OF THE GIMET-QR

While there is no perfect set of textbooks or materials, the GIMET-QR was developed to help school districts differentiate among the options that have passed the IMET CCSS alignment screen to identify high-quality materials that meet district needs and provide a coherent learning experience for students and teachers. Prior to adoption, the GIMET-QR allows districts to:

- Make cross-publisher comparisons based on identified strengths and weaknesses.
- Assess whether it will be necessary to produce or purchase supplemental materials to fill in identified gaps in content or instructional guidance, or to address areas where materials are weak.
- Plan professional development support or activities for professional learning communities.
- Examine historic trends in student achievement by grade level to know where their students will need the most support.

While GIMET-QR was designed to support textbook adoption, it can also be used by districts to:

Assess the level of alignment of and identify gaps or omissions in current instructional materials. GIMET-QR can be used to evaluate current materials to find strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. This provides the district's staff with data to help prioritize which areas to address with supplemental materials or professional development, beginning with those that have the greatest leverage to improve student achievement and build a solid foundation for student growth.

A key consideration in reviewing omissions and gaps is how easily the teachers, schools, or the district can fill them. Gaps that reveal a lack of high-quality instructional tasks (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking, mathematical practices) across many grade-level standards is a tall order for any teacher to fill, and lends itself to inconsistent or incoherent teaching and learning. However, providing additional practice on a skill may be readily and easily addressed. In the same manner, omissions

critical to the delivery of instructional content need to be considered in terms of what will be required of the district in order to complete a coherent curriculum.

Assess the rigor and quality of instructional tasks and assessments. The GIMET-QR also lends itself as a study and guidance document for school or district teams to gain a shared understanding of what the Common Core State Standards or other college- and career-readiness standards require for student learning, and how those requirements translate into classroom practices and student work. When looking at student work and/or observing classroom discussions, whether in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), walkthroughs, or grade-level or content-level meetings, the rubrics can be used by staff to examine the work and rigor of instruction to determine if they are at the appropriate level. For example, classroom observations could focus on the quality of text-dependent questions used during ELA instruction, as well as the complexity of student explanations in mathematics.

Assess the alignment of district scope and sequence documents. Additionally, the tool can be used to determine the degree of alignment in the current scope and sequence of ELA and/or math to ensure standards criteria are addressed. For example, in ELA there are specific grade-level standards that require comparing more than one text by a single author, pairing informational and literary text for comparing and contrasting, or using text sets to develop knowledge needed for writing effective arguments that include opposing views. This level of specificity provides reviewers the opportunity to evaluate the quality and alignment of current texts/material and student tasks which facilitate the identification of areas where additional supports and resources are needed. In mathematics, there is an emphasis on attending to the academic language and language structure in applications of math concepts and modeling. This includes providing specific examples of typical misconceptions/student error patterns and how the materials should address them.

Provide professional development that builds capacity and a shared understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy and/or mathematics. Another potential use of the GIMET-QR is to help teachers, supervisors, and principals become deeply knowledgeable about the grade-level ELA and mathematics standards. While it is important to have a basic level of knowledge about the standards, it is equally important to recognize how the delivery of standards-based instruction is impacting student work. The GIMET-QR can be used to provide insights on instructional delivery in light of the evidence of learning found in student work.

Staff can also use the tool in combination with student performance data to prioritize annual focus areas for each grade level in English language arts and in mathematics K-8, and to align teacher practices to ensure student evidence and tasks are rigorous.

Thus, the GIMET-QR serves several purposes in the review of both current and prospective materials. It provides a lens for districts, prior to adoption, to assess whether it will need to produce or purchase materials to fill in gaps or omissions in grade-level expectations. It also provides valuable data for districts to use in assessing current materials and building instructional capacity to provide high-quality standards-based instruction.