

High-Quality Instructional Materials



The Big Idea:



High-quality instructional materials make a big difference for kids. What is chosen matters.

What are instructional materials?

Instructional Materials are the detailed plans and materials that educators use to teach students what they need to know to be successful. *Not all instructional materials are created equal.*

High-Quality Instructional Materials are aligned to Alabama's courses of study (i.e. the standards students must learn) and provide rich learning experiences that ensure that students have the knowledge and skills necessary for success in K-12, college, and beyond.

High-quality instructional materials:

- ↪ Cover the right standards in the right dosage at the right time to ensure that students are exposed to all of the content they need to succeed in the next grade level
- ↪ Are engaging and are relevant to the interest of students
- ↪ Are usable for educators and go beyond textbooks to encompass all of the materials that a teacher would need to facilitate the kind of instruction that we want to see in classrooms

Alabama's Courses of Study	Curricula or Instructional Materials	Assessments
<p><u>Standards</u>, known in Alabama as the courses of study, communicate to students, families, & schools what students should learn by the end of each grade level throughout their K-12 experience, so that they are prepared for college and career.</p> <p>Standards (or courses of study) don't tell teachers <u>how</u> to teach. They tell them <u>what</u> to teach.</p>	<p><u>Curricula or instructional materials</u> are the detailed plans for how teachers will teach the standards. They include textbooks, unit plans, lesson plans, books, readings, projects, and other related materials.</p>	<p><u>Assessments</u> are how teachers will understand if students are learning the standards. There are different types of assessments:</p> <p><i>Diagnostic</i>: Given at the beginning of a unit or the year to determine what students already know</p> <p><i>Formative</i>: Given multiple times throughout a unit or year to understand what students are learning and where they have gaps</p> <p><i>Summative</i>: Given at the end of a unit or a year to determine what has been learned</p>

Why do high-quality instructional materials matter?

- 1** **Instructional materials are a cost-effective intervention that can have a significant impact on academic outcomes.**

A study from 2017 showed that, at the middle school level, an average teacher using high-quality instructional materials has the same effect as coaching an average teacher to becoming a great teacher who is highly effective in facilitating student achievement.

Instructional materials that are higher quality aren't necessarily more expensive.
- 2** **Not only are high-quality instructional materials proven to have a positive impact on student achievement, but using them has a larger impact than other policy interventions.**

Improving the quality of curriculum is **40x** more effective than reducing class sizes
- 3** **Providing high-quality instructional materials to teachers will allow them to dedicate more time to activities that make a difference for students.**

If school districts select high-quality instructional materials, teachers have a strong starting place for their curriculum and can spend more time adjusting units and lessons to meet the needs of their students.

Implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials

The Big Idea:



It's not enough to select high-quality instructional materials. Teachers & school leaders must learn how to implement them through curriculum-based professional development.

Professional development for teachers that is based on and aligned to the curriculum used in the classroom is critically important to student learning. A teacher that knows how to implement high-quality instructional materials effectively has a bigger impact on student achievement. One study found that math teachers participating in ongoing professional development based on the curriculum they were using were much more likely to adopt effective teaching practices than those who participated in other kinds of professional development.

How can we infuse more quality into Alabama's instructional materials selection process?



Hold a high bar for selecting high-quality instructional materials.

Working with a respected expert, like EdReports, would increase the rigor and quality of the textbook rubrics and the quality of training for textbook committee members. Eleven state departments, like the Mississippi Department of Education, have partnered with EdReports to increase quality in their instructional materials selection process.



Communicate about instructional materials effectively & transparently.

Communicate what instructional materials are high-quality clearly and transparently to all stakeholder groups by releasing textbook reviews online in an accessible format.



Revise Alabama's Textbook Law.

Revise the AL Textbook law to add language to build out and fund a curricula & assessments review process to rate quality, with incentives to procure the highest quality materials.

- Include stipends for teacher leaders to lead the review process.
- Mandate that all textbook reviews are published online to increase transparency.
- Ensure that textbook committee members have the time necessary to review instructional materials effectively.



Provide Curriculum-Based Professional Development.

Increase the amount of available professional development that teaches teachers how to use high-quality instructional materials.

- Train teacher leaders to become content leaders who then train other teachers.
- Provide funding for the PD and stipend for content leaders. This will provide both opportunities for teacher leadership & will strengthen teacher retention.

