



## COMPARE AND INVESTIGATE MATERIALS GUIDANCE

### Resource Overview

A tool to support LEAs to compare and investigate materials under consideration

### WINNOWING

### Context

It is important to know all of the options available in the instructional materials market before narrowing the list of programs to investigate. Often there are products that an adoption committee is unaware of that would be well-suited for the district and its priorities. There are products from large publishers, small publishers, open-education resources, and emerging titles that districts can consider. (Learn about what programs exist and how they measure up to standards expectations [in the report center](#). [The compare feature](#) is a great place to start.)

However, districts do not have time or capacity to take a deep dive in each available option, as every set of materials you review will require a heavy investment of time and consideration. One of the most important steps in the adoption process is to winnow the field to a manageable number of programs so that committees can review each potential set of materials in depth.

This resource provides guiding questions that can be used to support adoption teams as you know and winnow your choices.

### Suggestions

It is recommended to narrow your list to three to four options that will potentially meet the needs of your district. As part of your research, use the EdReports compare feature and read reports to learn more about how well materials meet expectations for alignment and other quality characteristics. Contact other districts or experts to gather anecdotal information about programs. Then use these guiding questions to help your adoption committee narrow the list of options and prepare to investigate the materials.

### Guiding Questions

1. What are the district-specific priorities and/or parameters? (e.g., *aligned to standards, materials contain texts that represent diverse authors and central characters, materials have strong application problems, or materials meet district technology requirements*)?
2. Start with the EdReports indicators that directly address your priorities.
  - a. Which priority will you focus on first as you look across the programs?
  - b. Are there priorities that you cannot get information about from the EdReports reviews? How will you gather information on those (e.g., *committee review, internet research,*

*contacting publishers)?*

3. Are there additional considerations your committee must take into account as you are narrowing your list of possibilities? What are they?
4. Have you learned anything in your research that would point you toward or away from specific programs? What additional questions do you have for publishers?
5. What is your timeline for the next phase of your adoption, investigating the materials? How many programs can you deeply study in this timeframe?
6. How do you plan to communicate this shorter list of programs to your stakeholders? What, if any, methods will you establish for feedback on your focused list?

## INVESTIGATING

### Context

One of the most critical components of a strong adoption process is taking the time to deeply investigate your options. This resource provides your team with a variety of approaches to investigate the programs after you have winnowed your list of options to the few you are considering, along with guiding questions to help you decide how to proceed with your investigation. Deeply studying those few options will give your team an opportunity to see how well the materials address content expectations and district priorities.

### Suggestions

Use the questions below to guide your committee through deciding which of these approaches will best fit the needs of your team. The guiding questions should help you land on an approach or approaches that will give you the information needed to make a final decision. Your team may decide you only have time or capacity to engage in one of these approaches, while other teams may decide that multiple approaches is the right way to proceed.

### Guiding Questions

1. What do you need to learn about each set of materials to inform your adoption decision? Consider your district priorities and what you'd need to see in the materials to assess whether they support your local priorities.
2. Which stakeholders do you need to gather feedback from to inform your decision (students, parents, community organizations, other teachers)? What mechanisms could you use to gather that feedback?
3. Who will be engaged in the investigation (your committee only, a larger committee, a subset of all teachers, etc.)?

### Approaches

**Book Study:** In a book study, your committee, or larger group of stakeholders, will divide the materials into sections to study during the time allotted before each meeting, then you'll come together in a group and share your findings.

**Field Test:** A field test can be used to "try out" the material options you are contemplating. Field tests work best when they are intentional, have clear goals, and have tools developed to capture

evidence.

\*[See our specific recommendations for organizing a field test HERE.](#)

**Professional Learning Community or Grade-Level Review:** Foster collaborative exploration and learning among colleagues by planning/teaching lessons to understand the structure, protocols, and flow of the materials.

**Publisher Presentation:** In conjunction with one or more of the approaches above, bringing in the publishers of the two or three programs you're considering is a good way to get some questions answered, specifically how the materials address your priorities.