

WEEKLY UPDATE

January 21, 2014

Re: Which instructional materials are best for your students?

In 2011, the Texas legislature changed the state's criteria for adopting instructional materials. Since that time, products are eligible for state-adoption if they meet three criteria: (1.) they must be aligned to *at least* 50% of the TEKS, (2.) they must be aligned to 100% of the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), and (3.) they must be free from factual errors. Therefore, the state's "adopted" list no longer includes only instructional materials that are aligned to 100% of the TEKS for any particular grade and subject.

On November 22, 2013, the SBOE released a list of 405 state-adopted math, science, and technical applications products. More than 2/3 of them are on-line products. Several factors are at work that challenge educators as they select instructional materials for use in local classrooms. Some of the factors are these: (1.) the sheer number of products on the state-adopted list, (2.) the limited amount of money districts have to spend on instructional materials, and (3.) the legal obligation of superintendents and board presidents to certify that they provide instructional materials that align to 100% of the TEKS in each grade and each subject.

Learning List is a subscription based professional review service that empowers educators to select K-12 instructional materials and on-line courses that best meet their students' needs. Personnel in a district that subscribes to Learning List may access its on-line library of completed reviews **and** may request reviews of other K-12 instructional materials and on-line courses, including open-source products. .

Why is this service needed in Texas? **First**, tools provided with the service help superintendents and board presidents document the district's compliance with the 100% rule. **Second**, teachers can use the alignment reports to design TEKS aligned lesson plans for each instructional material reviewed. **Next**, with the service's analysis of materials, suggestions are offered on how to "fill in the gap" for those products that do not address 100% of the TEKS. **Finally**, since all school budgets are tight, the modest subscription fee saves personnel costs and the time needed to review instructional materials. **Districts can use IMA funds to purchase the Learning List subscription.**

While TACS has no connection to Learning List, our organization finds the service to be one from which small and mid-size schools may benefit. Jackie Lain, the president of the firm, will be at Mid-Winter or can be reached at JackieL@LearningList.com if you would like to schedule a webinar or gain more information.