

Developing Local Priorities When Selecting Instructional Materials

A resource designed to guide curriculum adoption committees on how to determine the specific needs of the students and teachers in their local community.

When it comes to instructional materials, what you select and how you select matters. The ultimate goal of an effective adoption process is to choose curricula that are aligned to high-quality, college and career-ready standards *and* meet the specific needs of your community. A comprehensive adoption process includes time and capacity for districts to establish local priorities using an equity-focused lens that will guide their investigation and selection of new materials. The practice of including local priorities in early adoption planning can help to ensure districts select materials that better serve students who have been previously marginalized.

What is this resource?

This is a tool designed to help district adoption committees determine local priorities and the specific needs of the students and teachers in their local community in addition to alignment with standards and other indicators of quality. Setting local priorities builds upon an analysis of relevant local data such as student demographics, teacher characteristics, and achievement levels. The priorities will be used throughout the adoption process to guide local decision-making.

How should this resource be used?

We recommend developing three to four local priorities at the start of an adoption process to ensure specific community needs inform decisions throughout the work. This template can be used to guide stakeholder discussions to reach agreements on the priorities that will influence the entire selection process. This resource is part of our comprehensive [6 Key Adoption Steps](#) feature and best used in conjunction with [Step 1: Develop Your District Lens](#)—which comes after committees have [examined current data](#) and established an [instructional vision](#). Local priorities may then be used to drive decisions that are made in [Step 3: Know and Winnow Your Choices](#).

Developing Local Priorities: Connect Your Local Context and Vision to Characteristics

The characteristics that will ultimately shape your local priorities should be informed by data and your district's instructional vision.

- Use this [Data Collection Tool](#) to walk through the steps you can take to locate and analyze data that will highlight the local needs of your district.
- To connect existing data to your local priorities, engage your adoption committee in a discussion to:
 - Think about what the data is telling you about your district's needs
 - Identify student populations that are in need of support
 - Brainstorm the types of curricular supports that may be beneficial for identified student populations
 - Brainstorm the types of teacher supports necessary to best support identified student populations

What student populations are in need of support to address performance gaps (one per cell) <i>Example: English Learners</i>	What types of curricular supports would be beneficial for this student population? <i>Example: More opportunities to write on demand using evidence from the text</i>	What types of teacher supports are necessary to best support this student population? <i>Example: Strategies for incorporating sentence stems to support referencing text evidence</i>

Informed by data, your district's instructional vision also shapes your local priorities.

- Use this [Simple Process to Articulate an Instructional Vision](#) to outline what you should consider when crafting a vision.
- Once your instructional vision is set, your adoption committee should:
 - Discuss what you envision students knowing and doing as a result of using new materials
 - Discuss how you see teachers supporting student learning
 - Think about how to actualize your vision for students and teachers in classrooms using materials

Based on our instructional vision statement, what do we want students to know and do?

Example: We want students to express ideas through a variety of modalities.

Based on our instructional vision statement, what do we want teachers to know and do?

Example: We want teachers to design experiences that allow students to facilitate their own learning.

In order for our instructional vision to be actualized, what should we prioritize when looking for materials?

Example: We need materials that incorporate multiple means of expression. We need materials that provide guidance on student-centered activities.

Your district's data and instructional vision will help you generate potential priorities for your materials.

- Refer back to the list of curricular and teacher supports you generated based on an analysis of your local data and identify key areas to address
 - These should be areas the committee deems as essential for the district's success in meeting student and teacher needs
- Cross-reference the key areas from the data with the statements listed in the third box of the instructional vision exercise to ensure alignment between district needs and the vision of what the district is looking for in materials
 - If the alignment between the data and vision isn't clear, the committee should discuss ways to refine the vision to reflect district needs
- Once the alignment is clear, committee members can independently brainstorm specific, observable characteristics materials should have
 - These characteristics should be described in terms of what the materials should have, do, and reflect in relation to addressing the data-informed focus areas and the district's instructional vision
 - This exercise can be done using Post-It notes (in person) or by typing into a shared document (virtually)
 - Committee members should list ideas without discussion
 - Try to defer commenting or judging to encourage all ideas to be listed (go for quantity)

What would you like your materials to have?

Example: Given our large English learner population, materials should include supports that allow students to draw on their home language when establishing background knowledge and use "spiralling" to provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with content language.

What would you like your materials to do?

Example: To best support our large numbers of novice teachers, lessons in materials should provide explicit instructional guidance and provide resources for multiple ways to assess student learning.

What would you like your materials to reflect?

Example: Materials must include strategies for authentic application of concepts in students' daily life and communities such as the use of questions and activities that ask students to apply knowledge and skills to experiences that may occur outside of the classroom.

Categorizing the Ideas

- Use the list from the previous section to collaboratively group ideas according to themes and patterns
 - Start by grouping similar characteristics then assign a defining label for each category
 - Allow time for committee members to elaborate and clarify their characteristics

Example Category: Teacher Supports

- *Teacher instructions with annotated solutions that help them understand math content*

Category 1:

-

Category 2:	Category 3:
•	•
Category 4:	Category 5:
•	•
Category 6:	Category 7:
•	•

Narrow Ideas

- Examine the categories to determine the themes that are most important to committee members (“Must Haves”).
 - These may be categories that have several characteristics listed or that resonate with the committee
 - Discuss how these categories are aligned to your local context and instructional vision

“Must Haves” List (one per cell) <i>Example: Teacher Supports: Teacher instructions with annotated solutions that help them understand math content</i>	What needs in the data does this category its characteristics address? <i>Example: Surveys from high school math teachers indicate they would like more supports for teaching advanced math concepts</i>	How does this category and its characteristics connect to the instructional vision we have set? <i>Example: The vision states that teachers engage in effective math teaching practices</i>

Determine Priorities

- Review the “Nice to Have” list and the committee’s comments from the previous discussion
- Determine the three to four draft priorities by cutting the categories to only include those that have the clearest and strongest connections to data-based needs and instructional vision
 - This can be done by a majority vote or by building consensus through open discussion
- Once the priorities are determined, refine them to be as descriptive as possible and anchored in what the materials will, should, and/or must be since they will:
 - Drive your work around winnowing your list of materials to investigate
 - Shape the decision-making around which materials to ultimately adopt
 - Be reflected in communication plans that educate stakeholders on the adoption process
 - Inform the launch and implementation plans that are tailored to your district’s specific needs

#	Priority Description <i>Example: New science materials must include resources for inquiry-based learning activities that allow English Learners to engage with concepts in concrete and meaningful ways</i>
1	
2	
3	
4	

Seeking Input and Feedback from Stakeholders

- Share the draft priorities with parents, teachers, administrators, content experts, and even students to ensure that members of these groups have an opportunity to weigh in. When sharing draft priorities, you should be sure to:
 - Explain the process that went into drafting the priorities
 - Provide rationales for why the priorities were selected
 - Make it convenient for stakeholders to provide feedback
 - Be willing to make adjustments and share updates with stakeholders

Getting buy-in for local priorities on the front end of the adoption process will help establish your message for the new materials once they are selected.