

**4 Ways to Investigate Materials**

There are many ways districts have historically engaged in the investigation of materials. Knowing EdReports gives you plenty of information regarding a program’s alignment to standards and instructional shifts as well as additional information regarding usability factors, your committee’s job is to review the options for your established priorities. You may find that your committee will need to engage in a few different ways of investigation to get the information you need to make a final decision.

 **What is this resource?**

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 and some 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 just how well the materials address content expectations as well as your district priorities.

 **How should this resource be used?**

Use the questions in this section to guide your committee through deciding which of these approaches will best fit the needs of your team. The guiding questions should help you and your team land on an approach or approaches that will give you the information needed to make a final decision and also consider what stakeholders to engage and how you plan to collect the evidence from your investigation. We’ve also included a series of approaches that district teams have used as their selected method/s for investigating their program options. 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.

**Questions to Consider before Your Investigation:**

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| **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.** |
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| **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? ?** |
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| **Who will be engaged in the investigation (your committee only, a larger committee, a subset of all teachers, etc.)?** |
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**Read about the 4 Potential Approaches to Investigating Materials**

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| **Approach** | **Description** | **Suggestions** |
| **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. | * Each week decide what parts of the program you’ll examine (e.g., culminating tasks, supports for English language learners). Focus on how the materials address your designated priorities.
* Give committee members a set of questions to answer or a rubric to complete.
* Gather the evidence in a common place and discuss at your next committee meeting.
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| **Field test** | A field test can be used to “try out” the material options you are contemplating. We find field tests work best when they are intentional, they have clear goals, and tools have been developed to capture evidence.\*[See our specific recommendations for organizing a field test HERE](https://edreports-206618.appspot.com/resources/lessons-from-the-field-best-practices-for-piloting-curriculum). | * Establish the purpose for the pilot. Make sure you know exactly what you’re trying to learn about the materials that can only be learned in a pilot.
* Test routines and sample activities from the materials in classrooms rather than an in-depth teaching of months long or yearlong material.
* Plan for pilots with the student experience in mind. Ensure the learning objectives and scope fit within the overall academic year so that standards and skills are not inadvertently missed.
* Set a limited time for the field test based on what you want to learn.
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| **Professional learning community or grade-level review** |  | * Plan a lesson, or series of lessons, together to learn more about the lesson structure and protocols.
* Teach a lesson to your colleagues as a way to understand the flow of the lessons and practice any protocols.
* Look at a module or unit to understand how the materials support multilingual learners or students with unfinished learning.
* Unpack a module to see how your district priorities are addressed; test out any protocols or strategies with your students.
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| **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.  | * Create a list of questions based on your priorities and what you’re learning in other parts of your investigation (e.g. how are multilingual learners addressed? What are the non-negotiable parts of a lesson?)
* Give each publisher a set amount of time and request they have a content specialist present.
* Use your rubric established for your study to gather evidence from the presentation.
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**Additional Questions:**

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| **What approach/es would serve your committee best and provide the kind of evidence you need to make a decision? If multiple approaches, how will you organize them (separately, concurrently)?** |
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| **Once you’ve settled on how you will study the materials, how will you collect the evidence you are gathering from your study and make it visible for all of those participating? What should your tool/rubric include?** |
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| **What additional stakeholders will need to be tapped to investigate the materials in your chosen approach? How will you ensure they are properly prepared to play their role in the investigation?** |
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