

## Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation (IMQE) Portal Frequently Asked Question

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Contact [specialprojects@tea.texas.gov](mailto:specialprojects@tea.texas.gov) with additional questions related to the IMQE pilot and IMQE portal.

## Q1: What is the Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation Portal and what are the Instructional Material Reviews?

A growing body of research demonstrates that the quality of instructional materials teachers use has a significant impact on student achievement. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across Texas are eager to purchase the best materials for their teachers and students, but free information about the quality of materials can be unorganized, unreliable, and difficult to access. Additionally, reviewing instructional materials is a time-consuming process for the teachers who serve on their LEAs' review committees.

Written into statute in 2017 (Texas Education Code § 31.081 and § 31.082), TEA will conduct an independent analysis of each instructional material to evaluate its quality. An **Instructional Material Review** is a completed quality evaluation for a set of materials. By completing these reviews, TEA aims to support and strengthen LEAs' local review processes by providing clear, transparent, and user-friendly information about the quality of instructional materials.

The **Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation Portal** is a website, open to the public at no cost, where all completed reviews will be published. The portal will be designed so instructional materials are easily comparable across specific quality indicators and will allow districts to sort materials based on their local needs and preferences.

## Q2: What does it mean to evaluate the quality of instructional materials?

TEA will conduct an independent analysis of each instructional material to evaluate its quality. As a part of this process, the agency will ensure the definition of quality is transparently communicated via Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation (IMQE) rubrics that will be used to assess all instructional materials.

The quality evaluation rubrics will be customized based on content area and grade band with some commonalities across all rubrics. For example, all quality evaluation rubrics will include the percentage of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) coverage as determined by the State Board of Education (SBOE) process, an assessment of supports for diverse learners, and a determination of how easy materials are for teachers to use in the classroom. However, the draft English language arts and reading (ELAR) evaluation rubric has content specific quality indicators related to the variety and complexity of texts, how students are required to respond to the texts, and whether materials support the development of foundational literary skills.

## Q3: How did the Instructional Materials Portal come about?

This project is required by statute in SB 810, 85(R) and companion legislation in HB 3526, 85(R). These bills required TEA to develop and maintain a web portal that includes: a) general information (e.g., price, technology requirements, etc.) for each material on the SBOE list or submitted by a publisher, b) a quality evaluation of the material and the extent to which materials cover the TEKS, and c) a repository of open educational resources accessible at no cost, including state-developed materials. In addition, the agency is

required to contract with a private entity to conduct an independent analysis of materials in the web portal. Through a competitive process, Safal Partners was identified to be the third-party evaluator for the purposes of the Instructional Material Reviews. An additional Request for Offer (RFO) is in process for the IT work to build the actual web interface for the Instructional Materials Portal.

Additionally, this initiative came about to increase districts' access to high quality materials. A growing body of research demonstrates that the quality of instructional materials teachers use has a significant impact on student achievement. LEAs across Texas are eager to purchase the best materials for their teachers and students, but free information about the quality of materials can be unorganized, unreliable, and difficult to access. Additionally, reviewing instructional materials is a time-consuming process for the teachers who serve on their LEAs' review committees. Smaller LEAs, especially, can find the process especially daunting without access to any third-party evaluation resources. The IMQE portal will make this process easier for LEAs by providing free, clear, transparent, user-friendly information about the quality of materials which can be used as part of their local adoption process if desired.

#### **Q4: When will the reviews be published?**

The pilot reviews for ELAR 3–8 will be shared no later than May 2019 with LEAs who sign up to participate in the Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation (IMQE) pilot. The agency is planning to publish the first set of reviews on the official Instructional Materials Portal in November 2019.

#### **Q5: Once published, do districts have to use the information?**

LEAs will maintain complete local control over purchasing decisions. LEAs will continue to have complete autonomy to decide if and how they use the reviews as part of their local decision-making processes.

#### **Q6: How does this impact local control?**

TEA believes deeply that LEAs are best positioned to decide which curricula best fit the needs of their teachers and students. The IMQE Portal is designed to complement and strengthen LEA's local review process by providing clear and transparent information about the quality of curricula. The portal does *not* impact a district's ability to make their own local review and adoption decisions.

#### **Q7: I heard that there is a requirement to submit a letter if my district doesn't select "top-tier materials." Is that true?**

No. Materials reviewed in the pilot will not receive an overall score, so no materials will be "tiered" when completed reviews are provided to districts.

However, as a part of the pilot, TEA is requesting that all pilot participants provide feedback on the reviews, regardless of what they select. This will help the agency understand what is and is not helpful about the reviews in the context of a district's local decision-making process. The feedback will *only* be used to help

TEA improve the quality evaluation process in the future to best meet LEA needs. This feedback will not be used for any other purpose within the agency.

### **Q8: How does this align to the State Board of Education’s Long Range Plan?**

The State Board of Education adopted a new Long-Range Plan for Public Education that establishes an overall goal of “access and equity so that all children receive what they need to learn, thrive, and grow.” To achieve this vision, one specific recommendation from the SBOE is that TEA “provide a greater array of no-cost or low-cost resources to support high-quality, aligned curriculum and instruction for all educators.”

The Instructional Materials Portal directly addresses this recommendation. Quality instructional materials are an equalizer in the classroom, so increasing access to free information about quality materials will increase equity for students across Texas. Additionally, all quality reviews published on the IMQE Portal will be free to access for all districts. This will increase equity for small and rural districts that have limited resources to review all instructional materials on their own.

### **Q9: How does the IMQE Portal support the SBOE process? Are they different?**

The agency has engaged in ongoing conversations with the State Board of Education (SBOE) to ensure the IMQE will complement and augment the established SBOE’s TEKS-coverage review process. This is demonstrated in the Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation (IMQE) rubric where the first measure of quality reflects the results of the SBOE’s review process to capture what percentage of standards are met. All materials reviewed for quality will also be reviewed through the SBOE’s TEKS-coverage review process, and the results of the SBOE process will be featured as a part of the quality reviews on the Instructional Materials Portal.

### **Q10: Who has been involved in providing feedback?**

As of mid-November 2018, TEA has received feedback from more than 450 stakeholders including but not limited to Texas teachers, district and campus administrators, SBOE members, regional education service centers, numerous Texas associations, and publishers.

### **Q11: How many districts or people have been included in feedback opportunities?**

The agency has conducted 24 presentations, 17 focus groups, and 46 individual phone calls, representing targeted outreach to over 400 stakeholders and 12 different organizations and associations. In addition, the rubric was sent out to multiple TEA email lists that included over 43,000 subscribers with a request for feedback. Finally, TEA requested all education service centers hold presentations and focus groups with all districts in their regions.

### **Q12: What is the process for developing the rubric?**

The goal of the IMQE rubrics is to provide LEAs with helpful information about the quality of instructional materials. The rubrics will be customized based on content area and grade band with some commonalities across all rubrics. The agency is piloting the instructional materials review process with English language arts and reading (ELAR), grades 3–8, so a pilot ELAR rubric is currently under development. The ELAR rubric development process will occur in three phases:

- **Phase I: Early Draft of ELAR Rubric** TEA, in partnership with a third-party evaluator, developed a draft rubric specific to Texas and the TEKS. This rubric was initially shared with SBOE members, regional administrators and focus groups of Texas school districts in early October of 2018. The rubric was then sent out to multiple TEA email lists that included over 43,000 subscribers with a request for feedback. Finally, it was shared with publishers for feedback. The original draft can be accessed here: <https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=51539626543>.
- **Phase II: Updated Draft of ELAR Rubric for IMQE Pilot** From all the individuals contacted during Phase I, TEA received feedback from more than 450 individuals. Upon reviewing all responses, TEA made enhancements to the draft rubric to incorporate trends in feedback from stakeholders. Some examples of updates made to the rubric based on feedback are outlined in a memo that can be accessed here: <https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=51539627016> This version of the rubric will be used to complete quality reviews during the IMQE pilot and can be accessed here: <https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=51539627015>
- **Phase III: Final ELAR Rubric for Full IMQE Portal** The agency will conduct pilot reviews of ELAR 3–8 materials. Throughout this process, educators completing the evaluations, pilot districts and pilot publishers will provide additional feedback on how the agency can further enhance the rubric to meet the needs of Texas educators. The agency will make final updates to the rubric before it is used to evaluate materials for the full Instructional Materials Portal. The updated, final rubric will be published in May of 2019. Reviews using this version will start in June of 2019 and will be completed and published on the official portal in November 2019.

Throughout the development process, the rubric has been designed specifically to align to the new ELAR TEKS, and the percent TEKS coverage will be reflected in the review. After instructional materials have been reviewed in ELAR, new rubrics will be developed for other TEKS subject areas and grade bands. The agency will collect feedback from Texas educators and stakeholders before finalizing all new rubrics used to review materials on the IMP.

### Q13: Who will be conducting these reviews?

All reviewers will be Texas educators and use the rubric developed for Texas. Each review team will consist of five reviewers and at least two review team members will be current classroom teachers. Other reviewers may be Texas district and campus administrators that demonstrate an excellent understand of the TEKS, rigorous expectations for high-quality instructional materials, and a strong understanding of effective curriculum implementation. Additionally, Texas reviewers will be geographically representative of the state. Select reviewers will have expertise serving students with special needs, English learners, and classrooms with high percentages of students receiving free and reduced price lunch.

All reviewers will go through a rigorous selection process and ongoing training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to write valid and reliable reviews that are helpful to Texas LEAs.

**Q14: What are the financial benefits to Texas?**

The Instructional Materials Portal, including all published quality reviews, will be available at **no cost** to districts across Texas. Feedback from some districts indicates that increased access to free, user-friendly information will help districts improve local review and adoption processes which for some of them may result in cost savings.

**Q15: What resources are being devoted to this project?**

Each district and open-enrollment charter school is entitled to a technology and instructional materials allotment (TIMA). The amount of the IMA is determined biennially by the commissioner and is based on the legislative appropriation. In the 2018–2019 biennium (school years 2017-18 and 2018–2019), the allocation for each LEA was based on total enrollment and bilingual enrollment. A total of \$1,008,997,073.19 was allocated directly to districts during this process.

In addition to the amount allocated directly to districts, the Texas Legislature reserves a portion of funds to be used for statewide initiatives. Written into statute in 2017 (Texas Education Code § 31.0211), money in the state technology and instructional materials fund shall be used to pay the expenses associated with the instructional materials web portal developed under Section 31.081. In the 2018–2019 biennium, TEA has allocated an average of \$2.5M per year to develop the IMP.

**Q16: My district already uses certain programs or subscriptions. Does this project just replace that?**

LEAs should use the resources that best meet their local needs. The goal of the IMQE Portal is not to supplant other resources that LEAs find helpful but to ensure that all LEAs across Texas have access to valid and reliable information about the quality of instructional materials.

**Q17: Are there incentives or consequences related to this project?**

No. Using the reviews is completely optional. There are no incentives or penalties associated with using or not using the reviews.

**Q18: How is this different from other states who are doing similar projects?**

The Instructional Materials Quality Evaluation and the Instructional Materials Portal are being developed specifically for Texas. The rubric was created specifically for Texas educators based on the TEKS, and the reviews incorporate the SBOE's TEKS alignment results into the quality rating. Finally, Texas educators serve on the review teams and complete evaluations.

**Q19: Why have some of the initially published deadlines been extended?**

TEA has extended application deadlines due to the high levels of interest from Texas educators. The work of the pilot and implementation of the instructional materials portal is on track. The pilot reviews will still begin in January of 2019 and be released in May of 2019, as originally planned.

### **Q20: How will the pilot affect school districts' timing for purchasing instructional materials?**

LEAs will maintain complete local control over purchasing decisions, and signing up to participate in the pilot is optional. The agency has interviewed a sample set of districts to learn more about the timing implications of the pilot as it relates to the Proclamation 2019 purchasing timeline. In these conversations, the district's responded in a variety of ways. TEA found that some districts expressed comfort in waiting to purchase materials so they could utilize the free instructional material reviews they would gain access to by participating in the pilot. Other districts indicated it would be too risky for them to delay purchasing. These districts may choose not to use the pilot information at all in which case their timelines would remain unchanged.

### **Q21: What is the timeline of Instructional Materials Portal related resources coming online in the next year?**

A variety of resources related to the instructional materials portal will be made available to districts in the coming months, including but not limited to:

- **November 2018:** ELAR grades 3–8 draft rubric released to all districts (note: this version of the rubric will be used to evaluate materials in the pilot)
- **Spring 2019:** ELAR grades K–2 and grades 9–12 draft rubric released for feedback
- **May 2019:** ELAR grades 3–8 reviews completed and shared with districts and publishers participating in the IMQE pilot
- **May 2019:** Final ELAR grades 3–8 rubric available to all districts to be used to inform own local evaluation process. This version of the rubric will be used to complete reviews on the official Instructional Materials Portal.
- **November 2019:** ELAR grades K–12 reviews completed and released to all districts

Note: Materials the agency reviews will be based on what publishers submit to the process. Therefore, it is unlikely that all ELAR materials are reviewed during the pilot or the full launch of the IMP. However, the agency will prioritize the materials reviewed based on LEA preferences, so we recommend districts submit requests for the materials they would like to see reviewed.

### **Q22: What materials will be reviewed during the pilot?**

During the pilot phase, TEA will facilitate the independent review of English language arts and reading (ELAR) instructional materials for grades 3–8. For the purposes of the pilot, we will only review core materials submitted by publishers. We expect to learn a lot during the pilot given the agency will proactively collect feedback from districts, reviewers and publishers. TEA anticipates the need to adjust the review process based on what is learned during this process.

**Q23: Will instructional materials for other grades and content areas be reviewed in the future? What about supplemental materials?**

The Instructional Materials Portal is intended to be a continuous process where teams of Texas educators conduct quality reviews of materials that meet the needs of districts. Therefore, additional content areas, grade levels, and supplemental materials will likely be reviewed at a future date.

Once the pilot is complete, the agency seeks to align the timing of quality reviews with the general adoption and purchasing timelines followed by most districts based on the proclamation schedule. For instance, the SBOE is expected to release its list of approved materials in November of 2019 for ELAR grades 9–12. TEA expects to release the ELAR, grades 9–12 quality reviews at the same time. This will allow LEAs to utilize both resources in their local adoption processes as they see fit.

Note: The agency may not review all materials districts are interested in purchasing. However, the agency will prioritize the materials reviewed based on LEA preferences, so we recommend districts submit requests for the materials they would like to see reviewed.