



A Standardized, Equitable, and Transparent High-Quality Instructional Materials Review Process

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Background

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) recently launched a refined review process for the adoption of high-quality instructional materials. This refined process gives districts of all sizes and types a choice of instructional materials that educators, content experts, and the state have deemed standards-aligned, culturally engaging, and grounded in the core values of the state education agency's (SEA's) strategic plan—equity, access to quality, success, inclusivity, community, and transparency.

Research shows students are more likely to achieve improved learning outcomes when they have access to high-quality curriculum. In Nevada, high quality curricula are materials that are standards-aligned and culturally engaging, meaning

- accurate, accessible, content-rich, easy to use, culturally and linguistically relevant, engaging, free from bias, research-based, and aligned to state standards;
- written with a clear purpose and effective lesson structure that enables pacing that provides flexibility for teachers to best support learning while encouraging curiosity and further inquiry;
- provide support in identifying the linguistic and cultural lenses that students use to make meaning in a content area; and
- when implemented with fidelity, ensure that students have opportunities to access the content and skills outlined in the standards.

Some of the challenges NDE faced with the previous process included a lack of clarity and transparency in the adoption process, content-area review rubrics varied in scope and complexity, content-area review participants' knowledge and understanding of the standards varied within and across content areas causing confusion and disagreement in the review process, and small and rural districts faced additional obstacles to participating in the instructional materials review and adoption process. Rural districts have limited staff capacity to calibrate rubrics and align with the rest of the state, and rural teachers felt their voices were overshadowed by larger districts.

Process

In designing the refined process, NDE and the Region 15 Comprehensive Center (R15CC) utilized

- Nevada statutes, guidance, and the previous instructional materials review approach;
- interviews with urban, rural, and suburban school district leaders;
- approaches used in Arizona, California, Colorado, Indiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas;
- research from RAND Corporation, Achieve, EdReports, EdWeek, and WestEd;
- open Educational Resources Commons, to understand how some states create, collaborate on, and curate free instructional materials; and
- pilot reviews of primary core materials.

As designed, the refined process aims to define

- qualifications for reviewers and trainings;
- how and when the process occurs (helps districts plan for purchasing);
- clear opportunities for the public to participate in the process; and
- clear, consistent expectations of reviewers via a materials checklist, roles and responsibilities guidance, a timeline, and a universal rubric. The rubric requires any approved materials to meet two sets of criteria: (1) the degree of alignment to the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) and (2) the access and equity dimensions of a given instruction material.

For example, the rubric allows reviewers across content areas to consistently rate materials according to whether they

- create opportunities for students to share their personal experiences and interests with each other and make real-life connections;
- foster creative, collaborative problem solving that builds college and career/workplace skills; and
- are from a variety of authors representing many cultures and perspectives.

The intent of this refined process is to help districts of all sizes and types—urban, suburban, rural, large, and small—tap into materials determined to best meet the needs of their students including students who come from different experiences and backgrounds

Outcomes

This past summer, Content Area Review Panels (CARPs) across Nevada began evaluating instructional materials according to the new process; those that passed the review were placed on an approved list to be adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE). Districts must then select materials from these lists for purchase.

One challenge NDE faced when designing this refined process was ensuring that small and rural districts were well represented on statewide review panels. Due to the population densities of larger districts and the frequent lack of capacity of rural district staff to participate—given the many other hats they wear and other priorities—this had not always happened in the past. Through their work with the R15CC, NDE was able to overcome this challenge by leveraging the expertise of regional coordinators from the Northeast, Northwest, and Southern Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) to adopt instructional materials in multiple content areas each year. This collaborative approach allowed small and rural districts, that may lack subject matter experts, to be represented by their respective RPDP.

Over the past two decades, the RPDPs have developed expertise in curriculum, instruction, diversity and equity, culturally responsive teaching, and technology. As subject matter experts in computer science, English language arts, English language development, literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies, regional coordinators co-facilitated or served on the content-area review panels.

The refined process created an equitable playing field for rural communities to participate by carving out an explicit path for rural districts to communicate their needs and interests to their RPDPs, who represented them on content-area review panels.

The [full process for the adoption of high-quality instructional materials](#) is available on the Nevada Department of Education website.

Table 1 describes the entities involved in the review process for the adoption of high-quality instructional materials and their roles and responsibilities.

Table 1. Roles and Responsibilities

Entities (Who)	Roles (What)	Responsibilities (How)
<p>Nevada Department of Education, Standards and Instructional Support (NDE SIS)</p>	<p>Oversee, facilitate, and manage the statewide adoption process for instructional materials</p>	<p>Step 1: Request for Quote (RFQ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review publisher criteria from national organizations. ● Develop Nevada-specific requests for each content area under review. ● Submit RFQs to purchasing for approval. ● Send RFQs to publishers. <p>Steps 2 and 3: Internal Technical Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain spreadsheet with information (i.e., date, time, publisher, product title, content area, grade levels, National Review Panel ratings) on submitted instructional materials. ● Notify publishers of non-compliant materials. ● Research and track any National Review Panel Ratings simultaneously. <p>Step 4: CARPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruit 5–7 panelists per content area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prepare standard application form and send to RPDP directors, district curriculum directors, teacher work groups, and other entities. ○ Secure representatives from each RPDP for English language arts, mathematics, and science panels. ○ Review applications and select panelists. ● Train panelists on the review process, NVACS, universal rubric, and rubric calibrating procedures. ● Organize, facilitate, and document CARP meetings and results. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publish a meeting calendar. ○ Determine method for reaching a unified recommendation. ○ Develop a report of findings for each content area under review. ○ Notify publishers of approved and rejected instructional materials. ○ Review resubmissions of previously rejected instructional materials.

Entities (Who)	Roles (What)	Responsibilities (How)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publish list of state-approved instructional materials on NDE website. ○ Debrief the process with panelists and summarize results in the process debrief template (to be developed). <p>Step 5: Cabinet Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prepare one consolidated list of recommended materials. ● Discuss list of recommended materials with Cabinet. <p>Step 6: SBE Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education programs professional (EPP) oversees instructional materials adoption process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Submit agenda item for SBE meeting. ○ Communicate SBE meeting date to SIS director, content area EPPs programs professionals, and CARP panelists. ○ Request that SIS director, content area EPPs, and CARP panelists attend the SBE meeting prepared to address any questions. <p>Step 7: SBE-Approved Instructional Materials Lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintain and ensure access to spreadsheets of approved instructional materials for each content area. ● Update spreadsheets with review findings and key information for each item on the approved list (e.g., title, publisher/provider, grade level, alignment to NVACS, adoption year, and adopting districts). <p>Step 8: Process Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EPP oversees instructional materials in consultation with SIS director. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Synthesize findings and debriefs across CARPs. ○ Document any issues that arose, how they were addressed, and the strategy used to successfully resolve. ○ Consider potential process refinements. ● Convene Nevada Instructional Materials Advisory Committee (NIMAC) (as needed). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and communicate with committee members. ○ Poll committee members for availability and notify them of any meeting dates at least three weeks in advance. ○ Convene and facilitate any committee meetings. ○ Document committee meetings and share results with Cabinet.

Entities (Who)	Roles (What)	Responsibilities (How)
RPDP	Nominate subject matter experts to participate and/or co-facilitate CARP	<p>Step 4: CARP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand the NVACS and district instructional needs. • Represent the districts served by the RPDP. • Participate on CARP. • Support the SBE instructional material adoption process and district instructional material adoption process (if applicable).
CARP	Evaluate and rate instructional materials submitted by publishers	<p>Step 4: CARP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include subject matter experts, content area and special education teachers, curriculum directors, technology specialists, English language development experts, and others as deemed appropriate. • Know and understand the NVACS. • Correlate content standards to the materials. • Participate in training and rubric calibration. • Conduct independent review of assigned materials. • Submit ratings and summary reports on time to the panel facilitator. • Participate in full-group deliberations to reach a unified recommendation. • Participate in summative session to debrief the process via meeting or survey. • Be available to field any questions during the SBE approval meeting.
NDE Cabinet	Approve the adoption process for instructional materials and timeframe	<p>Step 5: Cabinet Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the consolidated list of recommendations for all content areas under review in a given year. • Give final approval to instructional materials placed on the SBE agenda.
SBE	Adopt high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials	<p>Step 6: SBE Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review ratings and recommended materials lists developed by CARPs and presented in consolidated list of recommendations. • Approve recommended list of instructional materials for each content area reviewed.

Entities (Who)	Roles (What)	Responsibilities (How)
NIMAC	Serve, on ad hoc basis, as policy and regulation advisors to NDE SIS	<p><i>Note: The NIMAC shall only be convened when specific policy or regulations need to be reviewed and possibly revised. Members will be polled for availability and notified of any meeting dates at least three weeks in advance. Include district curriculum directors, district instructional materials leads, RPDP subject matter experts, and others as deemed appropriate by NDE SIS.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in advisory meetings as needed and requested by NDE SIS. Propose revisions needed to instructional materials policy or regulations when requested by NDE SIS.

Table 2 describes the actions the participating entities took during the review process for the adoption of high-quality instructional materials.

Table 2. Step Matrix

Steps	Actions	Entities	Tasks	Outcomes	Timeframe
1	Issue RFQ	NDE SIS	Develop, secure approvals for, and release Nevada-specific RFQ.	Specify requirements and provide publishers with a 30-day window in which to submit materials.	30–45 days June–July
2	Submit materials	Publishers NDE SIS	Publishers submit materials in digital/online formats.	Publisher submissions are time stamped and logged upon receipt.	30 days August
3	Conduct internal technical review	NDE SIS	Verify that submitted materials meet the RFQ requirements; where available summarize ratings from appropriate National Review Panels.	Materials that meet technical review criteria move on to the CARPs. Publishers of non-compliant materials are notified.	21 days September

Steps	Actions	Entities	Tasks	Outcomes	Timeframe
4	Evaluate and rate instructional materials	CARPs	Conduct independent reviews followed by a full panel deliberation, and then prepare report of findings.	Present consolidated list of recommendations to Cabinet. Publishers of rejected materials are notified and may appeal within 30 days of notification.	14–60 days September–November
5	Forward recommendations to Cabinet	NDE SIS	Review the consolidated list of recommendations for all content areas under review.	Instructional materials approval item placed on the January SBE agenda.	30 days December
6	Adopt instructional materials	SBE	Determine whether all listed materials shall be adopted officially.	List of approved materials that districts may adopt immediately.	No later than March 31 (Date TBD by SBE)
7	Publish the SBE-approved list of instructional materials	NDE SIS	Update and maintain a spreadsheet for each content area that includes review findings and other key information for each approved item.	Links to the list of adopted instructional materials are added to the instructional materials page of the NDE website.	30 days No later than April 30
8	Debrief and evaluate the adoption process	NDE SIS	Synthesize report findings and panel debriefs, discuss and document any issues and successful strategies, consider potential process refinements.	Implications for policy and practice are identified.	30–45 days No later than June 1

