

Strategies

To Guide your Textbook Adoption in History–Social Science

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The [California State Board of Education](#) appears poised to adopt history-social science instructional materials at its [upcoming meeting set for November 8-9](#). While [the state only reviews and provides a recommended list of materials for grades K-8](#), this will set in motion a months-long process in which teachers, instructional coaches, and various administrators will select, pilot, and adopt their own materials. [For grades K-8](#), the state will have already narrowed down the options; for grades 9-12, districts have much more discretion in choosing what to review and adopt. Since July, 2016 when the state adopted the new [History-Social Science Framework](#), teachers and administrators have been asking us for guidance about textbooks. Based on those conversations and some additional digging through state materials, here is a list of topics that may help to clarify what can happen with textbooks:

K-8 Instructional Materials

On November 8-9, the State Board of Education will hold its last public meeting of the year, take comments from the public, then review and make recommendations on whether to adopt the ten instructional materials packages that have made their way to the desk of this high body. These packages have gone through various levels of review and this is the last stop they make to be placed on the state approved list for K-8 textbooks.

When the State Board takes action, then California school districts have the firm list of packages that they

can start reviewing and piloting. I've heard from a number of teachers that they have been put on committees to meet with publishers to initiate this process. [This process](#) usually takes a year, and involves leaders – ideally with a significant amount of content expertise and teaching experience – reviewing and analyzing different components of texts. According to this kind of timeline (which districts are by no means obligated to follow, though I know a number of them are), materials would be reviewed this year, piloted in the 2018-2019 school year, and implemented in the 2019-2020 school year.

9-12 Instructional Materials

Because [the state issues no formal recommendations on instructional materials for 9-12](#), schools and districts have much more latitude in determining whether, when, and how materials will be adopted. However, assuming that districts have already decided to allot funds to review, pilot, and adopt instructional materials (as opposed to devoting resources to support instruction in another way), then they generally follow the same sort of timeline as K-8, but without the state approved list. A notable consequence of the state's absence from the review of 9-12 materials is that at this point, materials are not publicly available in one public repository site the way they are with K-8. This means that I, for example, have reviewed far fewer 9-12 materials than K-8, and I think some of the high school level materials are still in production.

In our [local control](#) state, districts set their own priorities and allot funds accordingly to meet the goals they set; this means that districts have near total discretion in determining whether to adopt instructional materials at all. However, given that textbooks are quite out of date ([2005 was the last time the state directed an instructional materials adoption](#)), and the fact that [history and the related social sciences have been marginalized](#) until the very recent past, districts do seem more inclined than they have in a long time to invest funds in updating instructional materials. Publishers have been anticipating this pent-up demand of the California marketplace, and teachers are eager to explore what's new. Across the state, instructional materials are being marketed widely to meet the diverse goals of California districts. Nevertheless, there are certainly some instructional materials packages that will fit the needs of one district better than others.

Strategies to Help you Choose the Right Resources

1. **Have a strong command of the [Introduction to the Framework](#).** In this chapter, we established the four components of a well-rounded history-social science education (content, skills, literacy, and civics). Be prepared to interrogate whether the packages you are reviewing align with these components in a sincere way. This will give you a global sense of how to examine the organizational structure of a package – everything from table of contents, chapter organization, sources, strategies, assessments, etc.
2. **Take note of the new material, with particular attention paid to the content, in your grade level chapter(s).** More on this further down in this blog post, but for example, if you teach 10th grade World History, make sure the topic of the Armenian Genocide is addressed; if you teach 12th grade Economics, make sure financial literacy is woven throughout.
3. **Engage your community, and define it broadly.** Textbooks are expensive and they do not come along very often; you don't want to unintentionally offend community groups by adopting a certain package. Encourage members of your community – with particular attention paid to families and experts in the area - to provide feedback on these materials.
4. **Use a toolkit that will help you determine the ways in which different packages align with the Framework, compare to one another, and fit the particular needs of your district.** In the coming weeks, we'll be posting a number of tools to support textbook adoption, as will others in your area and across the state.
5. **Allow for sufficient time to read, analyze, deliberate, discuss, and test packages.** There is no one right magical package that will do your teaching for you, but there are likely some that fit your curricular goals and students better than others. It takes time to identify the advantages and disadvantages of packages. With so many options and online bells and whistles, figure out which ones match most closely with how you want to design and pace your year.
6. Our last bit of advice is to **collaborate across districts, counties, and regions.** Our [History Project sites](#) around the state have been facilitating instructional materials adoptions for as long as we've existed – your network of history-social science educators is an asset that can help you navigate.