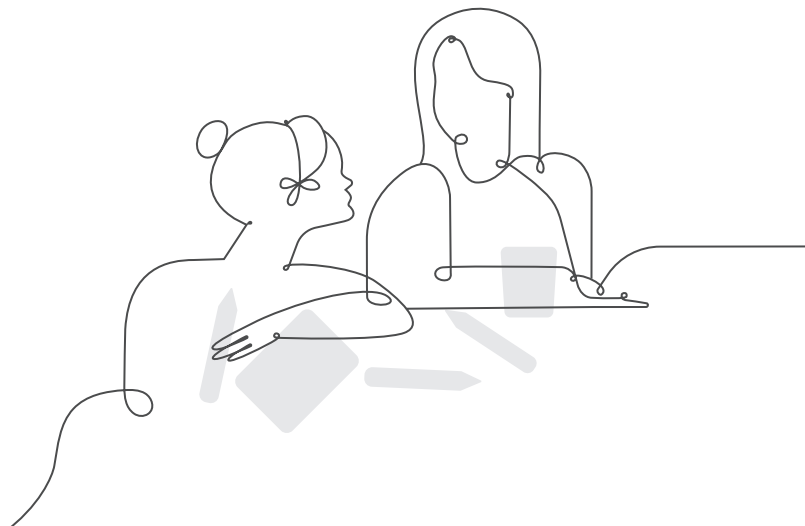


ELA instructional materials evaluation guide

High-quality instructional materials that make the difference



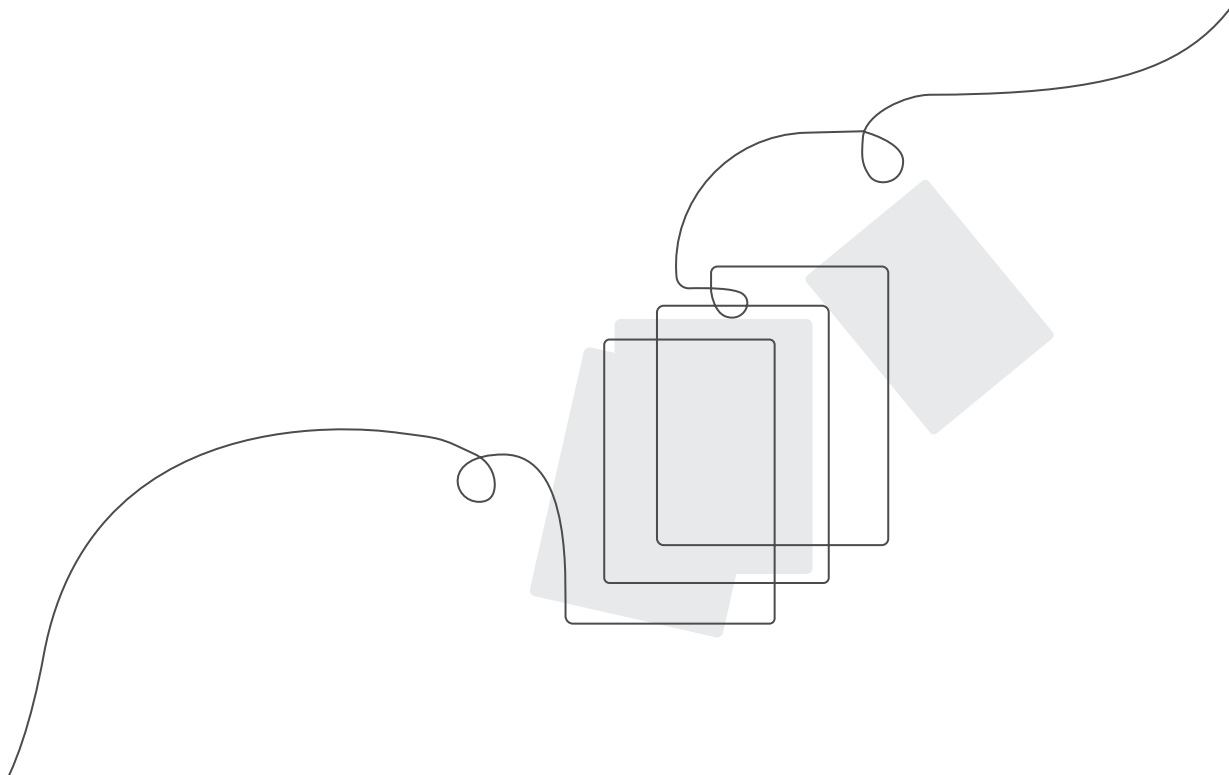
A new urgency for literacy

Now more than ever, strong literacy skills are of critical importance in preparing students for college, career, and civic responsibility. Selecting a new ELA program is a matter of equity—and, at times, a challenging task. Clarifying your district's needs and evaluating against proven criteria can help you choose materials that will support you in meeting your instructional goals.

- Do these materials align to the science of reading?
- Are foundational skills systematically taught and reviewed?
- Is knowledge built across domains and over time?
- Do these resources support my own growth as an educator?

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Recognizing high-quality ELA instructional materials

Research shows that students learn primarily through their interactions with teachers and content. High-quality materials not only influence students directly, but also influence the way teachers teach—with a proven and direct impact on outcomes. According to the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy report *Hiding in Plain Sight*,

“In the aggregate and for specific instructional programs, changing from ‘business-as-usual’ to a high-quality curriculum, or from a low-quality to a high-quality curriculum, can boost student achievement.”

The report calls this overall impact “the curriculum effect.”



Individual studies cited in *Hiding in Plain Sight* also showed that:

- **High-quality curricula increased student achievement** in reading, math, and science from the 50th to the 60th percentile and higher, which they refer to as “a potentially transformative impact if aggregated across an entire class, grade, or school” (David M. Steiner et al., 2017).
- Access to rigorous materials **increased achievement for Black and Latino students** (Card & Giuliano, 2016).
- **English language learners acquired knowledge and vocabulary faster** when using grade-level content (with supports) (Zwiers, 2008; Walqui & Heritage, 2012).



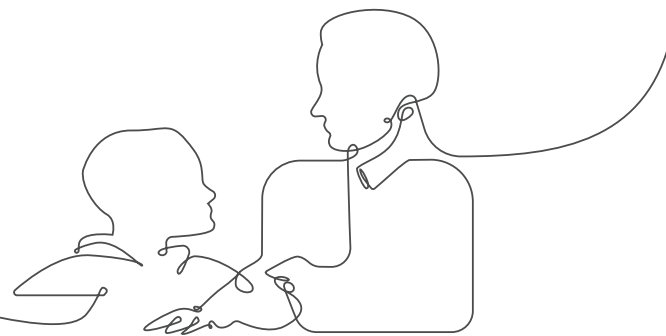


High quality is not defined in a vacuum—it's all about curricula that support teachers in the classroom. When you and your colleagues have access to high-quality instructional materials, you don't have to spend valuable time searching for resources and creating your own materials. You can feel confident using materials that have been developed and reviewed by researchers, academic experts, and other educators. Curriculum that works harder gives you more time to do what you do best: teach.

And high quality doesn't stop when you make the investment. Truly high-quality instructional materials continue to improve over time, based on data and feedback from real-world educators.

Three questions to ask when selecting ELA instructional materials:

- 1 Are these truly high-quality instructional materials that align to my ELA standards?
- 2 Are the standards presented with depth, quality, and engagement sufficient to support **all** my students?
- 3 Will these materials support my work as an educator, now and in the future?



Five steps to a successful review process

There are many ways to choose new ELA instructional materials.

The following is one possible approach:

1

Set priorities.

What matters most for your students right now? Is it building knowledge, accessing high-quality literature, learning to model civil discourse? Are all your students equally engaged and getting what they need to be successful after they leave your school? Are you concerned about equity across the board, or focused on improving results for one group of learners in particular? Clarity now will pay off down the line.

2

Choose programs to review.

Based on your district's priorities, zero in on two or three programs that offer a potential match. Request review copies. Create a clear plan for who will evaluate—and how.

3

Study and learn.

Dig into the materials to assess what they offer you—and what they don't. During this deep dive, set up time to talk with a program expert from each provider, if possible, to gain an understanding of how the program works and discuss its nuances. Make sure your review committee includes key ELA stakeholders—master teachers and new teachers, general teachers and specialists, technology users and traditionalists.

4

Evaluate and discuss.

Ask each reviewer to evaluate each program using consistent criteria, perhaps using the rubric on the next page. Seek input from other stakeholders—chief technology officers, administrators, and district PD experts. As you narrow the field, consider a pilot or model lesson drawn from each program.

5

Finalize the decision.

As a clear winner emerges and as you begin preparing for the final purchase, take a moment to think about what will happen next. What kind of training resources and tech support will your new ELA resource provider offer? How will the program work with your existing infrastructure? How will the program grow and evolve with your district over time? Clear answers here mean you can proceed with confidence.

“We knew that we wanted all students to be supported in accessing the high-quality, rigorous curriculum we chose... We wanted to send the message that the ELA content we’re covering is accessible to all learners.”

–Jennifer Bowers

Director of Curriculum,
Instruction, and Assessment,
Parkview School District

Model evaluation rubric (K–8)

Rating scale: Weak evidence ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Strong evidence

Criteria	Rating scale	Notes
1. Are these truly high-quality instructional materials that align to my ELA standards?		
a) Does this program align to the science of reading?	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
b) Are foundational skills taught in depth in the early grades and reinforced in future years? Are grammar, writing, and editing systematically built over time? (Look for: systematic, explicit, sound-first foundational skills instruction, and a strong sequence of grammar and writing instruction in which key foundational skills are reviewed as needed.)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
c) Do these resources build the knowledge my students will need for success in their academic career? (Look for: read-alouds and readings organized into systematic domains which build throughout the year and across the grades)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
d) Are students engaging with high-quality texts that build their love of language and story, as well as their knowledge of content? (Look for: literary and informational read-alouds beginning in the earliest grades, progressing to include authentic texts from diverse voices as student skills develop)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
2. Are the standards presented with depth, quality, and engagement sufficient to support all my students?		
a) Will students who come to me with gaps in knowledge receive what they need? (Look for: instruction which builds background knowledge and fills gaps when entering a new domain)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
b) Will all my students access the same grade-level texts? (Look for: rigorous grade-level texts with scaffolding that gives access to all)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
c) Does the program offer multiple modalities for connecting with what students are learning? Can students practice and demonstrate their growth in different ways? (Look for: a flexible routine including options for whole-class, independent, and partner work and demonstrating knowledge across modalities)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	

Criteria	Rating scale	Notes
3. Will these materials support my work as an educator, now and in the future?		
a) Do the teacher resources give me everything I need, with clear visibility into what to teach when, and how I might teach it? (Look for: an instructional plan that gives me more time to focus on my students)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
b) Do the program assessments give me data I can trust, and insights I can immediately implement? (Look for: data and insights that inform my teaching rather than adding to my workload)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
c) Will the program resources continue to evolve over time? (Look for: a commitment to enhancing materials over time and incorporating real-world teacher feedback)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	
Total score: ____/50		

For more information on high-quality instructional materials, visit **amplify.com/hqim-home**.

For more information on Amplify K–8 ELA, visit **amplify.com/k8-ela-reviewer-toolkit**.

Amplify.

