

Designing and Using Evaluation Tools for Instructional Materials



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PURPOSE

Evaluation is a critical phase in the instructional materials adoption process. It is where districts move from a narrowed set of options to making informed, defensible decisions about which materials best support their instructional vision and student learning goals.

This guide is designed to support districts in developing and using evaluation tools as part of a coherent, rigorous review process. It emphasizes not only the design of the tool itself, but also the structures and decisions that ensure the tool is used effectively and consistently.

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION REQUIRES MORE THAN A TOOL

Evaluation tools are essential, but they are only one part of a strong review process.

Well-designed tools can fall short if they are not grounded in clear priorities, used consistently by reviewers, or supported by additional sources of data.

Strong evaluation processes:

- ▶ Reflect clear and intentional priorities
- ▶ Use tools that differentiate between materials and surface meaningful evidence
- ▶ Ensure reviewers apply criteria consistently and objectively
- ▶ Incorporate additional inputs to strengthen decision-making

When these elements work together, evaluation results are more reliable, transparent, and aligned to district goals.

WHAT STRONG EVALUATION MUST DO

A well-designed evaluation approach should:

Produce consistent results

Different reviewers using the same tool should arrive at similar conclusions when examining the same materials.

Differentiate between materials

The tool and process should make meaningful distinctions between programs, not result in similar ratings across options.

Be grounded in evidence

Decisions should be based on observable features of the materials, not preferences or prior familiarity.

Support real decision-making

The evaluation process should lead to clear, actionable insights that inform selection, not just generate scores. If an evaluation approach does not meet these conditions, it is unlikely to support strong adoption decisions.

DESIGNING YOUR EVALUATION APPROACH

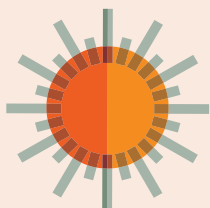
Define Priorities

Before building or refining an evaluation tool, districts must be clear about what matters most. Without clear priorities, evaluation tools often become overly broad, attempting to capture everything without meaningfully distinguishing between materials.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Identify the most important features of high-quality instructional materials based on district vision and student needs
- ▶ Focus on what will truly differentiate between programs
- ▶ Eliminate or refine criteria that do not meaningfully impact decisions



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ What must materials do to support our instructional vision in practice?
- ▶ What aspects of materials will most impact student learning?
- ▶ Which commonly used criteria do not actually help us distinguish between options?
- ▶ Where might a lack of clarity lead to inconsistent or unfocused evaluation?

Build or Refine the Evaluation Tool

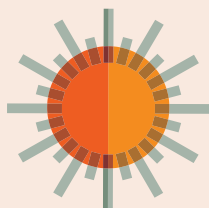
Evaluation tools should align to both state expectations and local priorities, while remaining clear and usable for reviewers.

In Florida, districts can use the state rubric as a stand-alone resource, build upon it, or create their own evaluation tool to reflect district-specific priorities.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Use state-aligned criteria as a foundation, then add or refine to reflect district priorities
- ▶ Ensure criteria are clear, specific, and evidence-based
- ▶ Balance depth with usability so reviewers can apply the tool consistently
- ▶ Design the tool to highlight meaningful differences between materials



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ How does the tool reflect both state requirements and district priorities?
- ▶ Are criteria written in a way that leads to consistent interpretation?
- ▶ Does the tool focus attention on what matters most, or does it dilute focus?
- ▶ Will the tool produce differentiating information that helps us make decisions?

Train and Calibrate Reviewers

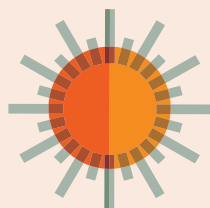
Even strong evaluation tools require careful preparation and calibration of reviewers.

Without shared understanding and consistent expectations, evaluation results can vary widely depending on who is using the tool.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Build a shared understanding of high-quality instructional materials and expectations for alignment
- ▶ Clarify how each criterion should be interpreted and applied
- ▶ Provide opportunities for reviewers to practice using the tool and compare results
- ▶ Identify where subjectivity may influence decisions and address it proactively



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ What do reviewers need to understand before using the tool?
- ▶ Where might different reviewers interpret criteria differently?
- ▶ How will we ensure consistency across reviewers?
- ▶ What structures will support calibration and alignment over time? (rubrics, clear criteria language, specific examples, etc...)

Incorporate Additional Data to Inform Decisions

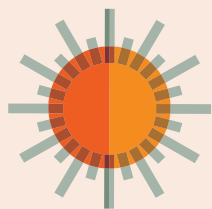
Evaluation tools provide critical information, but they are not the only source of insight.

Districts should intentionally identify additional inputs that strengthen the review process without overwhelming it.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Identify key stakeholder groups, outside of the review committee, whose input will add value (e.g. additional teachers and coaches)
- ▶ Select a small number of high-leverage questions aligned to evaluation priorities
- ▶ Adapt evaluation criteria into accessible formats for broader feedback
- ▶ Focus on collecting input that informs decisions, not simply gathering opinions



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ Who, beyond the review committee, should provide input?
- ▶ What feedback will help us better understand the strengths and limitations of materials?
- ▶ How can we streamline questions to make feedback meaningful and usable?
- ▶ How will this input be used to inform decisions?

From Evaluation to Decision

Evaluation is only valuable if it leads to clear, well-supported decisions.

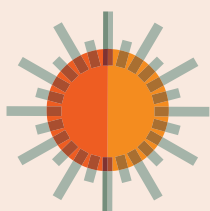
Districts must be prepared to communicate not only what decisions were made, but why.

Clear communication strengthens transparency, builds trust, and supports implementation.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Synthesize evaluation findings across reviewers and data sources
- ▶ Reconnect decisions to district priorities and instructional vision
- ▶ Identify strengths and limitations of selected materials
- ▶ Plan for how decisions will be communicated to different audiences



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ How do our evaluation results support our final recommendation?
- ▶ What evidence will we use to explain our decisions?
- ▶ Who needs to understand these decisions, and what do they need to know?
- ▶ How will we ensure our communication is clear, transparent, and defensible?

Plan for Implementation

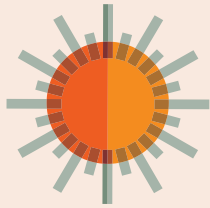
Evaluation tool design and use should be intentionally planned within the broader adoption timeline.

This includes ensuring that all components of the evaluation process are ready before materials are reviewed.



KEY MOVES

- ▶ Schedule dedicated time for tool development, refinement, and alignment
- ▶ Ensure the evaluation tool is finalized before committee training and publisher engagement
- ▶ Align evaluation work with key adoption milestones and decision points
- ▶ Plan for documentation that supports transparency and compliance



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ▶ When will evaluation tool development and refinement occur?
- ▶ What needs to be finalized before evaluation begins?
- ▶ How will we ensure all reviewers are prepared and aligned?
- ▶ How will we document and communicate our process and decisions?

FINAL THOUGHT

Strong evaluation processes do more than generate scores or rankings. They create the conditions for clear, consistent, and informed decision-making.

When districts are intentional about their priorities, tools, processes, and use of evidence, they are better positioned to select instructional materials that align to their vision and support meaningful improvements in teaching and learning.