Florida Materials Navigator

REVIEW AND SELECTION

Making Sense of the Evidence

A District Planning Guide

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Use this guide to build a clear process for bringing together the evidence your district collects during instructional materials review and using it to inform a thoughtful well-supported recommendation decision.

Strong materials decisions depend on more than collecting evaluation scores, reviewer comments, test-run findings, teacher feedback, and other information. District teams also need an intentional way to organize these sources, understand what each one can tell them, look for patterns across the evidence, and connect what they are learning back to their instructional vision and local priorities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EVIDENCE SENSE-MAKING?

Evidence sense-making is the process of bringing multiple sources of information together, examining what each source shows, and determining what the full body of evidence supports your district in concluding.

The goal is not to reduce every source to one score or immediately determine which materials to select.

Instead, teams move through a deliberate process:

The steps in this guide take your team through that progression, from identifying and organizing the evidence you will use to synthesizing what it means and determining what it supports you in concluding.

What collecting evidence can tell you

Individual evidence sources can help your district understand different aspects of instructional materials.

For example:

- An evaluation tool can show how materials align with agreed-upon criteria.
- Reviewer comments can surface the reasoning behind scores and recurring observations.
- Test runs can show how materials function in classroom conditions.
- Educator feedback can surface questions about usability, preparation, or instructional demands.
- Student feedback can provide information about students' experiences with the materials.
- Publisher information can clarify program features, supports, and requirements.
- Cost, purchasing, and technology information can identify practical considerations for adoption and implementation.

What evidence synthesis adds

Looking across sources can help your district understand:

- Where multiple sources point to a similar conclusion
- Where sources provide different or conflicting information
- Which findings matter most in light of your instructional vision and priorities
- What implementation implications are becoming visible
- What important questions remain unanswered
- What conclusions the evidence does and does not reasonably support

What evidence sense-making cannot establish

Even a strong process cannot eliminate uncertainty.

Evidence sense-making cannot establish:

- That one source tells the complete story
- That the highest overall score automatically identifies the best fit for our district
- That one classroom experience represents an entire program
- That teacher or student preference alone determines instructional quality
- That every difference across evidence sources must be resolved
- That every important question will be answered before a recommendation is made

Defining success

Success is not having every source point in the same direction.

A successful evidence sense-making process helps your team understand what the evidence suggests, where it is complicated, what remains uncertain, and what conclusions are supported in your district's context.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide supports district teams in planning how they will organize, examine, and make sense of the evidence collected throughout instructional materials review.

It is intended to help teams move from:

"Here are all our scores, comments, feedback, and data"

to:

"Here is what the full body of evidence helps us understand, what remains uncertain, and how that connects to our district's priorities."

By the end of this guide, your team will have defined:

- The evidence sources that will inform your selection
- When each source will be available
- What each source can reasonably help you understand
- How evidence will be organized and prepared for review
- How your teams will identify patterns, tensions, gaps, and implications
- How findings will connect to your instructional vision, priorities, and selection criteria
- Who will participate in sense-making and who will coordinate the process
- Shared guardrails for interpreting evidence consistently
- How conclusions, questions, and areas of disagreement will be documented
- How the evidence will inform the district's recommendation

Use with the companion resources

This guide is designed to be used with three companion resources that support different parts of the evidence-sense making process:

- Evidence Collection Tool: Use this tool to organize evidence about one set of instructional materials across multiple sources. Capture what the evidence shows, along with strengths, concerns, and questions or additional context.
- Patterns Across Evidence Tool: Use this tool to look across evidence sources and identify consistent strengths, consistent concerns, conflicting evidence, important trade-offs, implementation considerations, and remaining questions.
- Different Perspectives, Different Interpretations: Use this team activity to explore how the same evidence can lead to different reasonable interpretations. The activity can help your team identify where shared guardrails may support more consistent sense-making.

These resources can be used together or adapted to fit your district's existing materials review process.

EVIDENCE SHOULD BE INTENTIONAL FROM THE BEGINNING

Evidence is easier to make sense of when districts plan for synthesis before collection begins.

If evidence arrives in different formats, at different times, and without a clear understanding of how it will be used, teams may find themselves trying to piece everything together at the end of the process.

Planning ahead helps your district determine:

- What evidence you need
- What each source is intended to tell you
- How information will be organized
- Who needs access to it
- When key conversations will happen
- How findings will connect back to agreed-upon priorities

STEP 1 Identify the evidence landscape

Begin by identifying the information your district expects to have available when making its recommendation.

Different evidence sources answer different questions. The first task is simply to understand the landscape.

Potential evidence sources

Your district may use:

- Evaluation ratings or scores
- Reviewer comments and annotations
- Committee discussion notes
- Test-run findings
- Educator feedback
- Student feedback
- Parent and community feedback
- Publisher-provided information
- Cost and purchasing information
- Technology information
- Other district-specific evidence

Map your evidence landscape

Evidence Source	When will it be available?	What can it help us understand?

Start with purpose

For each source, ask:

- Why are we collecting this information?
- What question can this source help us answer?
- What can it not reasonably tell us?
- When will we need it for district sense-making?
- Does another source give us information about the same question from a different perspective?

Keep the limits of each source visible

Not all evidence should carry the same meaning.

For example, a test run can help a district understand how unfamiliar materials function in a limited set of classroom conditions. It cannot establish how the program will affect district-wide achievement.

Teacher feedback can provide important information about usability and preparation demands. It does not, on its own, establish the instructional quality of a program.

Clarifying these distinctions early helps prevent teams from asking one source to support a conclusion it cannot reasonably support.

STEP 2 Organize the evidence before interpreting it

Once you know what evidence you will have, determine how your district will prepare it for review.

A common structure helps your team examine evidence consistently across sources. Without one, the easiest-to-read score, most recent experience, or strongest individual opinion can receive more attention than other information.

The goal is to prepare the evidence so your team can understand what each source shows before deciding what it means.

Use the evidence collection tool

Use the Evidence Collection Tool to bring evidence about one set of materials into a consistent format.

For each evidence source, capture:

- **Evidence and observations:** What did the source actually show?
- **Strengths:** What did the evidence suggest was working well or aligned with district priorities?
- **Concerns:** What questions or concerns did the evidence raise?
- **Questions or additional context:** What else does the team need to understand before drawing a conclusion?

The tool includes space for evidence from evaluation results, reviewer comments, test runs, educator feedback, student feedback, parent and community feedback, publisher-provided information, costs and purchasing, technology, and other district-specific sources.

Determine how evidence will be prepared

Before your team begins sense-making, clarify:

- Who will gather and enter the evidence?
- When does each source need to be ready?
- Will the same person prepare all sources, or will responsibility be shared?
- What information should be summarized, and what original documentation should remain available?
- How will the team handle missing, incomplete, or conflicting information?

Evidence is not interpretation

As you organize evidence, distinguish between what the evidence shows and what your team thinks it means.

For example:

Evidence:

Eight of ten teachers reported that students needed more teacher support than expected during a test run.

Interpretation:

The materials may require additional professional learning or planning support.

The first statement describes the evidence. The second is one possible interpretation.

Keeping those separate allows the team to examine other evidence before deciding what the finding means.

Prepare for the next step

Once evidence has been organized using the Evidence Collection Tool, your team is ready to examine what each source shows before looking across sources for broader patterns.

STEP 3 Interpret evidence within each source

Before looking across sources, spend time understanding what each source actually shows.

Ask:

- What patterns are present within this source?
- Where do findings differ?
- What surprised us?
- What does this source help us understand?
- What does it leave unanswered?
- Are we seeing evidence, interpretation, or both?
- Are there differences by grade level, course, school, reviewer group, or context that matter?

Watch for averages that hide variation

A single number may summarize results without explaining them.

For example:

> An evaluation tool has an average score of 4.2 out of 5, but reviewer scores range from 2.8 to 4.9.

Both pieces of information matter.

The average tells you one thing. The variation tells you something else worth understanding.

Instead of immediately deciding whether the score is “high” or “low”, ask:

- Where did reviewers agree?
- Where did they disagree?
- What criteria produced the greatest differences?

- What evidence did reviewers cite?
- Does the variation point to a question the committee should examine more closely?

Once your team understands what each source shows on its own, you're ready to examine what becomes visible when evidence is considered together.

STEP 4 Look across evidence sources for patterns

After your team has examined individual evidence sources, shift from reviewing each source on its own to looking across the full body of evidence.

The goal is to understand what becomes visible when multiple sources are considered together. Look for areas where evidence points in the same direction, where findings differ, and where important questions remain.

Use the patterns across evidence tool

Use the Patterns Across Evidence Tool to bring findings from multiple sources together and document what your team is learning.

The tool guides your team to examine six areas:

Consistent Strengths: What strengths are supported by multiple sources of evidence?

Consistent Concerns: What concerns are supported by multiple sources?

Conflicting Evidence: Where do sources provide different findings or perspectives?

Important Trade-offs: What advantages and limitations should be considered together?

Implementation Considerations: What conditions, resources, or supports could affect implementation?

Remaining Questions: What is still unresolved or requires additional clarification?

For each finding, identify which evidence sources support it. This helps your team see whether a conclusion is grounded in several sources or depends heavily on one piece of information.

Look for convergence, tension, and gaps

As you complete the tool, use three lenses to guide your discussion.

CONVERGENCE

Where do multiple sources point to a similar finding?

TENSION

Where do sources point in different directions or reflect different experiences?

GAPS

What do you still not know? What additional information would help your team understand the finding more fully?

Different evidence does not always need to agree. Conflicting findings can help your team identify where context, perspective, or implementation conditions require closer examination.

Avoid counting sources as votes

The goal is not to determine which conclusion has the most evidence sources attached to it. Different sources answer different questions and may carry different meanings depending on what your district is trying to understand.

Instead, consider:

- What each source can reasonably tell you
- How findings connect to your district's instructional vision, priorities, and selection criteria
- Whether an apparent conflict needs additional context
- What the evidence does not support you in concluding

Prepare for the next step

Once your team has documented patterns across evidence, use those findings to consider what they mean in your district's context.

The Patterns Across Evidence Tool should help your team enter that discussion with a shared view of the strengths, concerns, tensions, implementation considerations, and unanswered questions that need attention.

STEP 5 Determine what the evidence means in your district's context

A pattern is not automatically important simply because it appears frequently.

District teams need to interpret findings against what they have already established about teaching, learning, students, educators, and implementation.

Return to:

- Your instructional vision
- Your local priorities
- Your selection criteria
- The student experience you want materials to support
- What you know about your educators and instructional system
- Your district's implementation context

Ask:

- Why does this finding matter for our district?
- How does it connect to our instructional vision?
- Which selection criteria does it inform?
- Does this evidence strengthen or complicate our understanding of alignment?

- What would this program ask teachers or students to do differently?
- What support might those differences require?
- Does a finding reflect an instructional shift your district expects or wants to make?
- Is something that appears easy to implement aligned with the instructional experience we want for students?

Context changes meaning

Evidence does not have meaning in isolation. District teams need to interpret findings in light of their instructional vision, priorities, and local context.

Consider this example:

A district reviewing one set of instructional materials finds:

- Strong evidence of mathematical rigor and coherence
- Greater preparation demands for teachers
- Initial student struggle
- Multiple student solution strategies
- Rich mathematical discussion
- Instructional routines that are not yet common across the district

On their own, those findings could lead to different interpretations.

Now consider that the district's instructional vision prioritizes student discourse, multiple representations, conceptual understanding, and productive struggle.

With that context, some findings may take on different meaning. Initial student struggle may warrant a closer look at whether it reflects productive struggle aligned with the district's vision, unfamiliarity with the materials, or another factor. Rich discussion and multiple solution strategies may signal alignment with the district's priorities. At the same time, the additional preparation demands and unfamiliar instructional routines still point to implementation considerations the district will need to address.

The goal is not to explain away concerns. It is to understand what the evidence means in your district's context and what implications it may carry for both selection and implementation.

Try this with your own evidence

- Which findings take on greater importance when viewed through your instructional vision?
- Which findings raise implementation questions?
- Are any initial concerns better understood as expected instructional shifts?
- What evidence still needs more context before your team draws a conclusion?

STEP 6 Establish evidence sense-making guardrails

The same evidence can reasonably lead people to different interpretations.

Teachers, content specialists, school leaders, and instructional material administrators bring different experiences, responsibilities, and perspectives to the discussion.

That makes shared guardrails important.

Guardrails are commitments that help the team slow down its reasoning, examine the full body of evidence, and avoid allowing assumptions or early preferences to drive conclusions.

Consider six common sense-making risks

Evidence vs. interpretation

How will we distinguish what the evidence shows from what we think it means?

Premature conclusions

How will we prevent first impressions from shaping how later evidence is interpreted?

Conflicting evidence

What will we do when sources tell us different things?

Limits of evidence

How will we account for what each source can and cannot reasonably tell us?

District priorities

How will our instructional vision guide interpretation without causing us to dismiss evidence that challenges our thinking?

Voice and Perspective

How will we ensure one person, role, or group does not disproportionately shape the team's conclusions?

Practice before you draft your guardrails

Before your team identifies its own guardrails, use the Different Perspectives, Different Interpretations activity to examine how the same evidence can lead to different reasonable interpretations.

The activity asks participants to consider evidence from the perspectives of a teacher, content or curriculum leader, school or district leader, and instructional materials administrator. As you work through the examples, discuss:

- What does this evidence tell us?
- What might someone reasonably conclude from the same evidence?
- What additional evidence would we want before drawing a conclusion?

Use what you notice to identify where your district may need shared expectations for interpreting evidence.

Draft your district guardrails

Identify three to five commitments your team will use.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Examples

Your district might commit to:

- Separate observable evidence from interpretation.
- Examine patterns across sources before drawing conclusions.
- Explore the reason for conflicting findings rather than immediately resolving them.
- Connect interpretations to agreed-upon district criteria and priorities.
- Consider perception data alongside other evidence rather than using it alone.
- Name what the evidence cannot support us in concluding.
- Document meaningful areas of disagreement rather than forcing consensus.

STEP 7 Design the sense-making process

Strong evidence does not automatically result in strong deliberation.

Determine how the work will actually happen

People and Process

Ask:

- Who needs to participate in reviewing and interpreting the evidence?
- Which perspectives need to be represented?
- When will key conversations occur?
- What information should participants receive in advance?

- How much time will the team need?
- How will findings and areas of disagreement be documented?
- Where will final conclusions live?

Responsibilities

Clarify who is responsible for:

- Coordinating the evidence collection
- Preparing and organizing information
- Ensuring evidence is available at the right time
- Facilitating sense-making conversations
- Documenting findings
- Following up on unresolved questions
- Bringing conclusions into the district's selection process

Responsibility	Person or Team	Timing
Coordinate evidence collection		
Prepare evidence for review		
Facilitate sense-making		
Document findings		
Follow up on questions		
Connect findings to selection		

STEP 8 Determine what the evidence supports you in concluding

The purpose of sense-making is not to eliminate every uncertainty.

It is to reach conclusions that are proportional to the evidence.

For each major finding, your team should be able to say one of three things:

We have enough confidence to conclude…

We need to understand more about…

We should not conclude…

This distinction helps prevent the team from overstating what the evidence shows.

Connect evidence to the selection process

Evidence synthesis should inform committee deliberation. It should not replace it.

Before making a final recommendation, ask:

- What conclusions are supported across multiple sources?
- What tensions or trade-offs should remain visible in the discussion?
- Which findings are most consequential given our district's instructional vision?
- What implementation implications should the team consider alongside instructional alignment?
- What questions remain unresolved?
- Which uncertainties can the district reasonably accept?
- What information should be documented as part of the rationale for the final recommendation?

STEP 9 Complete your District Evidence Sense-Making Plan

Use the summary below to bring the major decisions from this guide into one working plan.

Evidence Landscape

What evidence will inform our selection?

Timing

When will each source be available, and when is it needed?

Purpose

What can each source help us understand?

Organization

How will evidence be prepared and brought together?

Sense-making

How will we identify convergence, tensions, gaps, and implications?

Connection

How will findings connect to our instructional vision, priorities, and criteria?

People and process

Who participates, when will conversations occur, and how will findings be documented?

Responsibility

Who coordinates each part of the process?

Guardrails

What shared commitments will protect the quality of our reasoning?

Decision connection

How will the synthesis inform committee deliberation and the resulting recommendation?

District evidence sense-making plan

Source	Timing	Purpose	How will it be organized?

Sense-making process

When will the team examine evidence?

Who will participate?

What process or questions will guide the discussion?

How will findings, tensions, and unresolved questions be documented?

How will findings connect back to the instructional vision and selection criteria?

District Guardrails

1

2

3

4

5

Final Review

Check the process for coherence

Before beginning formal evidence synthesis, confirm:

- Our district has identified the evidence sources that will inform selection.
- We know what each source can and cannot reasonably tell us.
- We know when each source will be available.
- Evidence will be organized in a way that allows the team to examine findings across sources.
- Participants will distinguish evidence from interpretation.
- Our process looks for convergence, tensions, and gaps rather than relying on one score or source.
- Findings will be interpreted in light of our instructional vision, local priorities, and selection criteria.
- We have identified the people who need to participate.
- Responsibilities for preparing and facilitating the process are clear.
- We have shared guardrails for evidence interpretation.
- We will document both conclusions and remaining uncertainty.
- The team understands how the synthesis will inform the district's materials selection decision.

Appendix A

Essential evidence sense-making considerations

Use these considerations as a final check when refining your district process.

Purpose
Is it clear why each source is being collected and how it will inform the decision?

Limits
Does the team understand what each source can and cannot reasonably establish?

Organization
Can participants examine information across evidence sources rather than working from disconnected documents?

Interpretation
Will participants separate what the evidence shows from what they believe it means?

Patterns
Will the process identify findings supported by more than one source?

Tensions
Will conflicting findings remain visible long enough for the team to understand them?

Context
Will findings be interpreted in relation to the district's instructional vision and priorities?

Voice
Will multiple roles and perspectives contribute to the discussion?

Uncertainty
Will the process make space to name what the district still does not know?

Documentation
Will conclusions, areas of disagreement, and remaining questions be recorded?

Appendix B

Questions for examining evidence from multiple perspectives

Use these prompts when a finding could reasonably be interpreted in different ways.

- What does this evidence actually tell us?
- What are we interpreting or inferring?
- What might someone in another role reasonably conclude?
- What could be shaping the difference in interpretation?
- What additional evidence would help us understand this finding?
- Does another evidence source reinforce or complicate it?
- How does this connect to our agreed-upon criteria and instructional priorities?
- What would we be overclaiming if we drew a conclusion now?

The goal is not to find one "correct" interpretation immediately. It is to help the team distinguish among evidence, interpretation, and what it still needs to know.