

Executive Summary

Our Purpose

Instructional materials make a difference for student achievement. [Research shows](#) that students learn primarily through their interactions with teachers and content. The U.S. K–12 curriculum market is a \$8 billion a year industry, which receives a large portion of its revenue from the public sector. Yet very little is known about curriculum adoption and procurement and even less is known about the materials in use in classrooms. Because of the critical role instructional materials play in student learning, it is vital for all stakeholders to have a better understanding of the materials market—namely, what high-quality, standards-aligned programs are available and how teachers are using them.

Since its founding in 2014, EdReports has worked to identify and increase the demand for high-quality, standards-aligned K–12 instructional materials in service of improved student learning outcomes. Educator review teams [evaluate comprehensive, year-long materials](#) for alignment to standards and other characteristics of quality. The purpose of our evidence-rich reviews is to support educators with credible information as they choose and implement quality materials for their communities.

To date, the organization has published more than 500 reports of English language arts (ELA), math, and science materials available for free on EdReports.org. These reports indicate if materials meet, partially meet, or do not meet expectations for standards alignment.

In 2018, we conducted research to better understand the materials landscape and to evaluate the value and impact of our work. We drew upon data from EdReports reviews, information about publisher and copyright dates, and data from the American Teacher Panel (ATP) nationally representative survey on ELA and math curriculum use during the 2017–2018 school year to better understand the following questions:

- What percentage of comprehensive, year-long materials that are published and marketed as being standards-aligned meets EdReports' criteria for alignment?
- What proportion of the K–12 ELA and mathematics materials used regularly in classrooms meets expectations for alignment?
- Is there a relationship between the length of time that an EdReports review has been available for a product and the percent of market share for that product?

Key Findings

Through our research, we have identified a series of key findings we believe to be meaningful to the field. This analysis can support future work as organizations seek to ensure that all students have access to the quality materials they need to be college- and career-ready.

Aligned Materials are Available

EdReports has published reports for 98 percent of the known English language arts market and 95 percent of the known math market.¹ Of the materials we have reviewed: 49 percent of the ELA market meets EdReports criteria for standards alignment and 28 percent of the math market meets expectations for standards alignment. This means that there are many aligned options available for districts to adopt and for teachers to use.

Most Materials Used in Classrooms are Not Aligned to Standards

Even though nearly half the ELA materials and more than a quarter of the math materials meet expectations for standards-alignment, these materials are not used in classrooms enough. Only 15 percent of ELA materials and 23 percent of math materials regularly used by teachers meet EdReports criteria for alignment. The gap between what is available and what is being used remains one of the largest challenges to ensuring the promise of quality materials.

¹ We define the “known market” as comprehensive, year-long programs. This excludes materials that are created directly by teachers or teachers relying on supplemental materials curated from public spaces such as Google or Pinterest. 62 percent of all ELA materials and 84 percent of all math materials used in classrooms qualify as the known market.

What's more, 38 percent of materials used in ELA classrooms and 16 percent in math are "unspecified," content which may include formal published materials, district-created materials, or materials procured online from sources such as Teachers Pay Teachers or Pinterest. Until we learn more about what these products are, we are unable to discuss their alignment and quality.

Information on Alignment Can Shape the Market

Before factoring in how long EdReports reviews have been published, we see that the longer products that meet or partially meet expectations for alignment are in the field, the more likely they are to be used by educators. Materials that do not meet expectations for alignment decrease in use by educators the longer that they are on the market. When we include the length of time that EdReports reviews have been available, there are changes to this predicted use or "market share."

Our research suggests that, accounting for the effect of the age of the material, there is an association between the length of time an EdReports review has been available for a material and the use of the material in the classroom. This association is seen after reports have been in the field a little over a year.

There is approximately a 1 percent increase of teachers that report using aligned materials for each year that the EdReports review of the program is published. For materials that partially meet or do not meet alignment expectations, we see the reverse. We see a roughly 1 percent decrease in the number of teachers that report using these products.

In short, the information EdReports provides about the products is associated with more teachers using materials that are aligned to college- and career-ready standards in classrooms. EdReports has anecdotal evidence that districts use our reports to inform adoption decisions, but the findings reported in this paper are the first statistical analysis to suggest that there is a possible association between the availability of EdReports reviews and greater use of aligned materials.

A Call to Action

We are excited by these findings, but also humbled and energized by how much work is left to be done. This report finds that only a small fraction of students are experiencing aligned curriculum even weekly, despite there being many options available to districts as they adopt.

This finding corroborates other recent research by [TNTP](#) and [EdTrust](#) that both looked closely at the quality of classroom assignments and found that most were off grade level or not aligned to standards. We must do more to ensure that districts are not only choosing great programs, but that teachers have the professional learning and systems support they need to implement those programs well. Improvement to materials will matter little if students do not get the opportunity to experience them.

We also see a critical need for more information about curriculum adoption and procurement. As a field, we must study policies that support the selection of high-quality instructional materials and learn from places that have high rates of aligned materials in use.

For example, our initial findings offer some insights on state adoption practices. We see no association between states with recommended adoption lists and the percentage of aligned materials in use. In states with mandated curriculum adoption lists, we actually see an associated decrease in the percentage of aligned materials in use. We highlight this data as a call for state leaders to consider how adoption lists are created and what additional resources might be consulted to ensure districts are choosing from a slate of quality, aligned materials.