

October 21, 2024

Dear Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE),

New Classrooms appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and feedback to the Instructional Materials Review and Approval (IMRA) Supplemental Math Quality Rubric as a result of the September 11-13 SBOE General Meeting.

New Classrooms is a national nonprofit on a mission to empower schools to move beyond the limits of the traditional classroom model so every student can access an educational foundation for lifelong success. Our research shows that supplemental materials tailored to the needs of each and every student have the unique ability to provide targeted intervention, acceleration and enrichment to promote a strong multi-tiered system of support.

Overall comments on the IMRA Supplemental Math Quality Rubric:

1. We commend Texas’s efforts to set up a separate, annual supplemental materials adoption process that complements the existing use of Tier I High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM).
2. We strongly support that the IMRA Supplemental Math Quality Rubric would evaluate supplemental materials on a subset of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that could span multiple grade levels or select grade bands. The flexibility that Texas has embedded for publishers to identify the applicable TEKS for their supplemental material and the language included within Section 1. Intentional Instructional Design, 1.1e that directs publishers to *“explain how concepts to be learned connect across grade bands (vertical alignment) and within the same grade level across concepts (horizontal alignment)”* is particularly noteworthy.
3. We applaud how the IMRA Supplemental Math Quality Rubric acknowledges the importance of mastering predecessor skills that come before a student’s current grade level material. The rubric achieves this by evaluating a supplemental material’s ability to help teachers differentiate instruction and address key knowledge gaps for students that have not yet reached proficiency in grade-level content. This is particularly important for mathematics, due its cumulative nature; the skills a student masters in one year are foundational for mastering more advanced topics later.
4. We support the emphasis regarding the use of embedded assessments within supplemental materials found in Section 2 Progress Monitoring, 2.2d, 2.2e, and 2.2f. Diagnostic and formative assessments that provide real-time data on student knowledge and progress towards skill attainment will ensure the precise information is provided for a teacher to provide personalized, tailored instruction for each student.

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Feedback to make the IMRA Supplemental Math Quality Rubric even stronger:

While we are in overall support of the IMRA Supplemental Math Quality Rubric, we wish to provide some additional feedback on where we believe that the rubric could be stronger. This feedback is bolstered by our twelve years of research on how students master skills in math. All suggested changes are found below in **bold**.

Section 1. Intentional Instructional Design

Where: Section 1.1c, Course Level Design, Page three.

Need: Provide strong service delivery and professional learning in this section.

Rationale: Successful supplemental products and programs increase the capacity of the system to implement with fidelity. Fidelity of implementation is highly correlated with student success. These services should provide differentiated pathways for teacher professional development, as staff members

Recommendation (existing evaluation criteria - 1.1c, K-5 and 6-12):

*Materials include comprehensive reporting category overviews that provide the background content knowledge, ~~and~~ academic vocabulary, **and differentiated supports for educators necessary to effectively teach the concepts in the lesson.***

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Where: Section 1.1h (NEW), Course Level Design, Page three.

Need: Ensure accountability for outcomes in this section.

Rationale: Successful material implementation must include a skill-level pathway to proficiency aligned to grade-level proficiency on TEKS, and materials providers must be willing to engage in outcomes-based contracting to guarantee the efficacy of those pathways.

Recommendation (new evaluation criteria - 1.1h, K-5 and 6-12):

Materials provide an opportunity for outcomes-based contracting.

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Section 2. Progress Monitoring

Where: Section 2.1g, Instructional Assessments, Page five.

Need: Reliably and precisely measure proficiency on foundational skills in this section.

Rationale: Many students have unfinished learning from prior years, and teachers need to know which essential skills in TEKS must be addressed for each student in order to ensure a personalized and effective learning experience.

Recommendation (existing evaluation criteria - 2.1g, K-5 and 6-12):

*Formative assessments are aligned **to and can reliably measure proficiency on discrete essential skills included in TEKS**, and lesson or activity objectives and include assessment items at varying complexity levels.*

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Where: Section 2.2c, Data Analysis and Progress Monitoring, Page six.

Need: Include strong reporting capabilities on student progress in this section.

Rationale: Providing valid and actionable data on skill attainment in student-centered ways allows students to increase their cycles of reflection and action. These cycles help to develop student self-efficacy and agency in their learning.

Recommendation (existing evaluation criteria - 2.2c, K-5 and 6-12):

*Materials include tools for students to track their own progress and growth **on predecessor and grade-level items**.*

Section 3. Supports for All Learners

Where: Section 3.1a Differentiation and Scaffolds, Page seven.

Need: Provide a pathway to proficiency for students in this section.

Rationale: Precise pathways to grade level provide a more targeted and focused approach to building foundational skills. Supplemental resources should account for student variability and ensure that the precise predecessor needs of each and every student are accounted for, and progress on these pathways should be transparent to both student and educator.

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Recommendation (existing evaluation criteria - 3.1.a, K-5 and 6-12):

*Materials include educator guidance for explicit activities and lessons scaffolded **through the strategic selection of aligned predecessor skills** for students who have not yet reached proficiency in grade-level mathematical concepts and skills.*

Section 4. Depth and Coherence of Concepts

Where: Section 4.2f (NEW) Coherence of Key Concepts, Page 11.

Need: Ensure Strong Integration with Tier I Materials in this section.

Rationale: While the rubric strongly addresses important aspects of internal coherence, a supplemental program should also ensure coherence in the student's overall math experience, and be responsive to and informed by district core curricula. Supplemental products are most often used in conjunction with a core curriculum.

Recommendation (new evaluation criteria - 4.2f, K-5 and 6-12):

Materials demonstrate coherence with student experience by connecting to the student learning experience in core curriculum, with adaptability to respond to varied curricular approaches.

Thank you for your consideration of our proposed revisions. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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