

SB 2565 (Creighton) & HB 1605 (Buckley)

What is meant by Curriculum?

This refers to what we teach our children in Texas public school classrooms.

What comprises the standards?

In Texas, our K-12 standards are called Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and are set by the State Board of Education (SBOE). The standards are developed to ensure that students at each grade level meet academic expectations.

What comprises instructional materials?

These are the lessons, texts, videos, quizzes, etc., that teachers use in the classroom.

Who decides what curriculum is used in Texas public schools?

Under current state policy, instructional materials are determined entirely by local school systems, while the State Board of Education sets the TEKS.

What is the Role of the Texas Education Agency (TEA)?

TEA administers the STAAR tests, which are aligned with state standards, to determine whether students are learning at grade level.

What is the role of the school districts?

School districts have flexibility in determining which methods and materials classrooms use to meet TEKS standards. The most common practice is for local districts to centrally adopt certain curriculum pacing expectations – i.e., specific concepts will be taught on a particular schedule. Then, school districts provide a set of textbooks and other resources from which lessons can be crafted. Teacher teams at each campus then periodically meet, design and deliver lessons they choose to develop together. The approach can vary by grade, subject and school, even within the same school district.

Who pays for the instructional materials?

Local districts choose and pay for the instructional materials.

This is a “huge quality of life issue for teachers and a huge quality of education issue for students.”

– Mike Morath
TEA Commissioner

How is the current system failing students?

Studies show that more than 80% of Texas public school children are taught below grade level. Since Texas children are not being taught at grade level, they can often make high grades in class yet fail the state assessment. With student achievement still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, this is a critical problem that must be addressed.

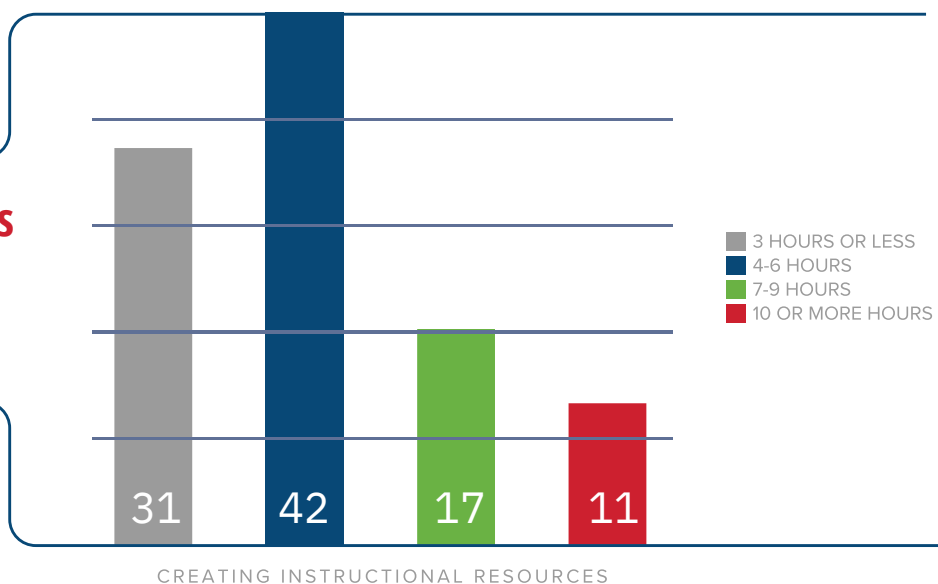
While many Texas students were not being taught at grade level before the pandemic, student performance suffered even more as COVID-19 shut down schools and moved classes online. A TEA-developed gold standard curriculum will provide support to help schools, districts, teachers and students overcome the gap.

How is the current system affecting teachers?

Subpar or less extensive curricula require much more work from teachers. Instead of just teaching, they must spend additional time preparing lessons, tests, quizzes, reading lists, etc. Teachers reported spending an average of seven hours per week searching for or developing instructional materials. They also report being given only 3 hours and 45 minutes per week on average to plan. Their workload is unsustainable. This system is accelerating teacher burnout by effectively requiring them to do two jobs: creating instructional materials and teaching – rather than just teaching.

More than 50% of students receive As or Bs, but only 17% demonstrate mastery of grade-level standards because most are not taught grade-level classwork .

How much time do teachers spend looking for outside resources each week?



How does the current system lead to inappropriate content?

With limited opportunity to preview lesson plans developed independently by teachers, students are more easily subjected to lessons that include high degrees of revisionist history and fringe views or are ideologically slanted. Parents are rightfully upset when these materials show up in classrooms.

What should be done?

To maximize student performance, improve the health of the teaching profession and eliminate inappropriate and ideologically slanted content, state policy should change to improve the quality of classroom instructional material. Specifically, TEA should be funded to:

- Create a gold-standard curriculum – with training and support provided to teachers.
- Incentivize districts to adopt the gold standard or an SBOE market-based alternative.
- Mandate minimum transparency framework for curricular resources to allow parents to easily access all content for classes in which their students are currently enrolled.
- Enable parent-triggered curriculum audits to give parents insight and input on what their children are learning.

What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined in Texas Education Code, Section 51.451, as “teaching, learning, or research resources that are in the public domain or that have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use, adaptation, and redistribution by any person.”

What is high-quality instructional material (HQIM)?

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are designed to cover 100% of the standards in a particular grade and subject for the full year and include a comprehensive set of rigorous course-level materials, teacher facing unit materials, teacher-facing lesson materials, and student-facing materials. They include:

- Full coverage of TEKS.
- Evidence-based practices in relevant content areas.
- Supports for all learners, including students with disabilities, students that are emergent bilingual, and students identified as gifted and talented.
- Frequent progress monitoring through embedded and aligned assessments.
- Implementation supports for teachers.

When students who started the year behind were given grade-level appropriate assignments, these students closed the achievement gap by 7 months.

Will the TEA-developed curriculum and teacher training be mandatory for school districts?

No. It will be a voluntary option for school districts that want to ensure children are taught at grade level, provide transparency for parents, and reduce teacher workloads.

However, the state could include incentives for districts that use these OERs or SBOE-approved market-based alternatives. A subsidy to cover new purchases, printing costs and a grant program to support educator training and implementation could be provided for any school that adopts OER materials or upgraded market-based alternatives.

Will the instructional materials be public?

Yes. State policies should mandate a minimum transparency framework for all instructional materials, designed to allow parents to easily review all instructional material for classes in which their students are currently enrolled. The framework would require all publishers to post all materials used by schools online.

How does access to HQIM help teachers?

HQIM access reduces the amount of time teachers spend searching for and curating materials, and with support for implementation, HQIM leads to improved outcomes for students by ensuring consistent access to aligned grade-level content.

What sort of training will be made available to teachers?

Teachers will receive training on understanding HQIM, curriculum literacy, and assessment literacy, as well as best practices for internalizing and implementing curriculum and assessments as a mechanism for increasing teacher content knowledge and ensuring consistently rigorous instruction for students.