

What English language arts, math, and science instructional materials have districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region states adopted?



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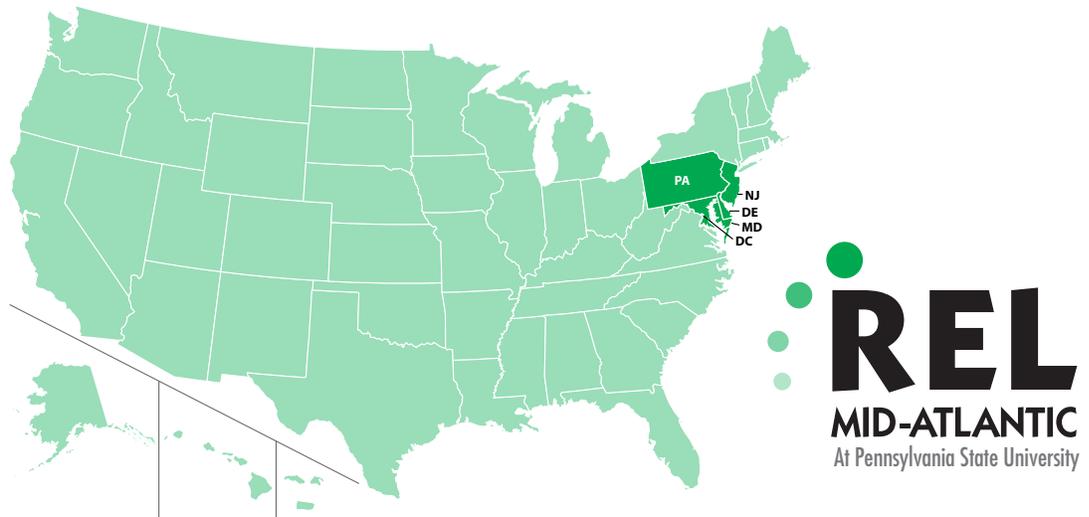
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Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

What English language arts, math, and science instructional materials have districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region states adopted?

This report describes results of an ongoing project to generate and share information on core texts, supplemental materials, and benchmark assessments adopted by districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region states for language arts, math, and science courses in specific elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. The results, described in the text, are also available in an online, searchable database.

Despite increasing accountability requirements and a national call for transparency in public policy, Mid-Atlantic Region state education agencies indicate that they have little information about what instructional materials districts adopt. This report describes first-year results of an ongoing project to generate and share information on core texts, supplemental materials, and benchmark assessments adopted by districts in the Mid-Atlantic Region states for specific elementary, middle, and high school grade levels in English language arts, math, and science. The report also describes the organization of the results in an online, searchable database (<http://www.relmidatlantic.org/ci>). Potential users of the database include state and local policymakers, practitioners, parents, voters, and researchers.

Two research questions drive this ongoing project:

- What instructional materials (core texts, supplemental materials, and benchmark assessments) have districts adopted in nine grade and content areas in English language arts, math, and science—and when?
- To what extent have districts adopted materials that the What Works Clearinghouse has found to have positive effects?

From March 2009 to September 2009, at least some data were collected from 997 (90 percent) of the 1,113 eligible school districts in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Item response rates were much lower, however. For example, for algebra 1, only 53 percent of eligible districts provided a core text title, 13 percent a benchmark assessment title, and 7 percent a supplemental materials title. This report provides descriptive information about core texts and recommends refinements to the data collection approach for year 2 of the study. Because of the low item response rates, the report does not include data on supplemental materials and benchmark assessments.

Several findings emerge from analysis of the database. (Regional findings are dominated by results for New Jersey and Pennsylvania, which together contain 96% of responding districts.)

- Few districts reported having adopted district-developed core text materials (0–2 percent in each grade and content area) or no core text materials (0–3 percent). More districts (1–14 percent in each grade and content area) reported having adopted more than one core text, which may include commercially or locally developed materials; the practice is most common in English language arts (5–14 percent), less common in science (2–7 percent), and least common in mathematics (1–2 percent).
- Depending on the grade and content area, 34–64 percent of reporting districts provided both the title and publisher of a single commercially developed core text. In grade 1 reading, for example, 49 percent of reporting districts provided both the title and publisher of a core text, for a total of 60 unique combinations.
- Districts were most likely to report both the title and publisher of a core text in grade 4 math (64 percent) and algebra 1 (55 percent). They were least likely to report them in grade 8 English language arts (34 percent) and earth science (41 percent).
- As of March 1, 2010, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) had issued reports on studies of 15 of the instructional materials identified by districts in Mid-Atlantic Region states that had met

WWC evidence standards with or without reservations. In 10 of these reports, the curricula were shown to have positive effects or potentially positive effects. At the time of this study, 256 responding districts (26 percent) had adopted one or more components (a core text, a workbook, a journal, online exercises, or a reference book) of at least one of these materials, and 17 districts (2 percent) had adopted some component of two of them. Everyday Mathematics, published by McGraw Hill, was the only one of these materials to be widely adopted, with 235 districts (24 percent of those reporting) adopting some edition of the core text or some supplemental material or benchmark assessment associated with the curriculum.

The experience gained during year 1 of the project informed recommendations for the operating plan for year 2:

- Address two research questions in the original project plan that were not addressed in year 1 related to analyses of adoption processes and amounts of professional development.
- Boost response rates and accuracy by giving districts lists of commonly adopted materials for each grade and content area and asking them to check the items they have adopted, fill in complete data if they have adopted materials that are not listed, or check options indicating that they have adopted no materials or do not offer the grade and content area.
- Revise and expand the coding guide to make it more consistent, to further specify

types of materials adopted, and to include coding of multiple materials.

- Develop a database capability to enable users to export data for their own use.

The project responds to requests from state education agencies in the Mid-Atlantic Region that wanted to know what instructional materials and assessments districts had adopted and when, what criteria they had used in selecting

the materials and assessments, and what professional development they had provided in association with adoptions. The requesting agencies want to assist districts in meeting requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 but do not have access to comprehensive or continuing information about core and supplemental materials adopted by the school districts for which they are responsible.

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