

Massachusetts Department of Education

Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Technology Materials

Evaluating instructional technology materials can be a challenging task. A wide variety of products is available. These products are constantly evolving, and it can sometimes be difficult to find materials that match the state's curriculum frameworks and the district's local curricula. This checklist provides some guidelines to aid in the evaluation and selection of instructional technology materials.

To make successful decisions about what to purchase, districts are encouraged to involve in the selection process those who will be using the products. This includes teachers, students, parents, heads of the curriculum development, technology, and business departments, and others. By doing so, districts can ensure that the materials meet educational needs while also fitting within the local budget and infrastructure.

In addition to the attached checklist, there are many resources available that can be accessed free of charge through the Internet to help in making decisions. It is recommended that this guide be used in conjunction with the other Massachusetts Department of Education documents and standards listed below.

- "Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials and Programs in Reading"
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/read/mrfp/criteria.pdf>
- Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials and Programs
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/math/2000/append2.html>
- Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials and Programs in Science and Technology/Engineering
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/scitech/2001/Appendices/ap7.html>
- Massachusetts Recommended PreK-12 Instructional Technology Standards
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/standards/itstand.pdf>
- Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Technology Materials

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
I. Academic Content					
Aligns with the English Language Arts Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the Mathematics Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the Science and Technology/Engineering Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the History and Social Science Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the Arts Framework Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the Foreign Language Strands and Standards					
Aligns with the Comprehensive Health Strands and Standards					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
II. Materials Development or Usage					
Is based on scientific research					
Rates highly in current peer usage or local studies					
Rates highly in published, professional reviews					
Demonstrates increased student achievement according to scientific research					
Facilitates learning that could not otherwise be achieved					
Facilitates learning that is difficult without technology					
Provides learning opportunities otherwise unavailable in current educational settings					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
III. Instructional Features					
Contain easily understandable directions for teacher and student					
Are easily accessible for auditory learners					
Are easily accessible for visual learners					
Are easily accessible for hands-on learners					
Are easily accessible for English language learners and fit within state and federal laws and regulations					
Are easily accessible for students with disabilities and fit within state and federal laws and regulations					
Use assessments to tailor the presentation to each student's skill level					
Allow/encourage students to exhibit previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers					
Contain a variety of exercises to improve comprehension and knowledge of content					
Include effective feedback for students					
Include appropriate adjustment to grade level of the student					
Include view and print in-depth analysis of student progress					
Align with the Massachusetts Professional Standards for Teachers (603 CMR 7.08)					
Meet recommended Instructional Technology Standards					

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
IV. Product specifications, qualities, and/or costs					
Allow for review of a fully functional demo version for testing of product capability, usability, and compatibility within current infrastructure					
Demonstrate proven industry record for product reliability and value					
Take into consideration cost of the product over its useful lifetime, including but not limited to software licenses, updates, training materials, maintenance, and other options that may be needed					
Allow for easy installation on Windows, Macintosh, or whatever operating system the district, school, or classroom uses					
Show no known conflicts with current software in use					
Are compatible with hardware and peripherals that the district, school, or classroom uses					
Allow for easy maintenance or updates through patches or upgrades					
Do not pose any security issues or compromise any sensitive or confidential data (keep in mind cookie settings in browsers, server setting changes, and port or security requirements)					
Comply with CIPA requirements (if product requires online usage)					
Are free of inappropriate or derogatory material					
Are fully compatible with the major browsers available and current installed versions, if application is browser dependent					
Demonstrate reliable accessibility through a Local Area Network (LAN)					
Demonstrate reliable accessibility through dial-up connection					
Demonstrate reliable accessibility through broadband connection					
Demonstrate reliable and full accessibility to content and services in students' or teachers' homes via networking or affordable home edition of software					
Demonstrate accessibility through CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, hard drive, or other media in case of Internet or network failure					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
V. Vendor supplemental services					
Show high level of reliability in customer support					
Facilitate easy integration into the districts' local curriculum					
Include high-quality orientation or professional development free of charge or at an affordable price					
Include effective, periodic train-the-trainer opportunities so that district or school staff can provide ongoing, high quality professional development					
Include ongoing, high quality professional development or other help through the vendors' or other websites					
Include other supplementary professional development materials (e.g., training manuals, videos, etc.)					

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Include effective training in usage of the materials for students and parents					
Include effective user help within a tutorial or other troubleshooting features in the product					
Include other help or troubleshooting free of charge or at an affordable price by person, website, e-mail, or phone during class hours and while teachers work offsite					
Include effective tracking of the level of usage of the materials by teachers					
Include effective tracking of the level of usage of the materials by students					
Allow for feedback on quality and effectiveness of the product that can be easily gathered and analyzed					