

Testimony to the Oklahoma Senate Education Committee

By

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Introduction

Good afternoon, members of the Oklahoma Senate Education Committee.

My name is Kim Gillert. I represent the Oklahoma Educational Publishers Association (OEPA), which is an organization of K-12 textbook publishers who support Oklahoma educators and districts through their adoption processes of high quality instructional materials. Our publishers represent the best industry materials that meet the learning needs of our diverse student populations across the state. Every April, publishers begin a new cycle of the bid processes at the state level, in the months following the OK State Textbook Committee conducts a high-quality instructional material-review process through their appointed advisors who are educators in school districts across our state. In November the process concludes with an approved list of instructional materials and vendors.

These Adopted publishers work together to support the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and its school districts, administrators, superintendents, principals, and teachers to provide an annual caravan. At Caravan, publishers share their state adopted programs and work collaboratively to deliver information about sound teaching practices that help improve learning outcomes, as well as educational opportunities for all students.

I am an Oklahoman and am proud product of Tecumseh Public Schools. I am also a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, my career began as a teacher in the Tulsa and Owasso Public School Districts.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some brief thoughts about the current status of K-12 instructional materials adoptions in the state.

Need for Increased Funding for High-Quality Instructional Materials

The OEPA is aware of the logistical and financial challenges that face Oklahoma's educational system, to ensure that high-quality instructional materials are available to every school across the state. Oklahoma is like many K-12 educational systems across the country whom are also are struggling through a severe lack of focused funding for instructional materials. This limit to access of HQIM, combined with a shortage of seasoned and certified educators, stalls the rate of progress that can be made in advancing Oklahoma's key educational priorities.

Allocated funding for instructional materials in Oklahoma continues to fall short or is deregulated year over year, which hinders, consistent-**equity of access** for Oklahoma schools to strong standards aligned, research-based curriculums, comprised of both print and digital learning solutions. Access to HQIM equity is a necessary piece to improving the educational outcomes of our diverse student populations. Without a consistent allocated funding source for instructional materials, publishers are especially challenged in providing customized solutions for our EL, at-risk, underperforming, and special needs students.

Line-item allocated funding amounts for instructional materials, are considered for adjustment yearly in surrounding states. The ability to fund based on the call of subject matter is vital for both student access as well as critical for educators to ensure the continuing professional development that funding can provide to districts. Professional development combined with HQIM increases the opportunity of success of our students and teachers because they are equipped to teach using effective pedagogy and up to date technologies which support both equity and growth. The current allocation of \$55 per student on an annual basis is not adequate to make this happen and therefore we recommend that the funding be raised to meet district needs.

Building and supporting strong investments in instructional materials funding for the K-12 education system is a critical priority for increasing student's educational outcomes and meeting the growth markers parents expect from Oklahoma's reading and math proficiency results. In the state of Texas, for example, there is a separate Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment, which current encompasses a two-year funding period.

This is \$103.17 per bilingual student and \$93.19 per non-bilingual students, per year through 2021.

Raising the per-student allocation to \$100 reflects a more accurate figure for supporting students in Oklahoma classrooms.

Need to Keep Pace with a Rapidly Changing Education Ecosystem

The OEPA is committed to supporting Oklahoma school districts through HQIM as they make the difficult but necessary transition to increased digital learning. We know that school districts will ultimately choose and incorporate learning technology in different ways, however, research has shown that personalized and adaptive learning solutions help students produce strong results starting with elementary and middle school, and continued through their high school educational journey. OEPA supports the use of various print and personalized digital learning tools to ensure that the individualized needs of students across a wide range of rural and urban districts are being met.

Need for Instructional Materials Designed to Meet State Standards

The OEPA takes a vested interest in its role as a thought leader on standards for students and educators. There is a multipronged approach involved in development and building a

strong framework for vetted curriculum and content delivery that can best support the needs of diverse student populations, while meeting the state guidelines and requirements for content standards.

We actively participate in tracking and monitoring the trends in the state adoption processes, to ensure that the content of print instructional materials and digital learning solutions are equitable and built to meet standards that fit the current state guidelines. Publisher curated content allows for incorporating innovative, effective, equitable curriculum with on-demand content, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) courseware as well as Professional Development through Master Teachers in actual classrooms. In fact-Norman Public Schools was a featured classroom for one of my company's exemplar's for blended learning.

Conclusion

The OEPA encourages the Oklahoma Senate Education Committee to closely review the instructional materials appropriations process for the coming school year and consider supporting efforts to lifting caps on instructional materials funding.

Lifting the funding cap on instructional materials will allow school districts to utilize their instructional materials allotment for the purchase of high-quality print textbooks and digital learning solutions that best fit the needs of diverse student populations, which can vary substantially for schools with large at-risk populations.

OEPA understands the importance of supporting students in their educational journeys, and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their future educational pathways. We are committed to supporting students through our best practices and will continue to play a role as a resource for the Oklahoma Senate Education Committee.

Sincerely,

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