

School textbook evaluation is not an easy task and has to be done thoroughly to be effective. You could start by using the Internet, studying publishers' catalogues and attending publishers' events to get information about different books but don't commit to buying any of them at this early stage. There is a lot to think about before decisions are made.

The best teaching based on the standards is likely to draw on teaching and learning materials from a range of different sources: textbooks from different publishers, materials downloaded from websites, computer software, materials designed by local groups of teachers, and so on. Materials that already exist in schools will also have their place. These will have to be chosen carefully to match the standards and the programme of study or scheme of work that you have planned and developed for your school.

Before committing yourselves to any textbook series, think about the questions below and analyse the content against the standards.

Notes

Checklist

Content

- How well does the content and approach used in the books match the standards? How good is the match with the key objectives for each grade?
- Is there a teacher's book to accompany the students' books to help teachers to plan and prepare lessons and perhaps provide solutions to problems?
- Do the books/materials include activities that are appropriate for all students?
- Will learners find the books/materials stimulating, interesting and rewarding? Do the examples and illustrations reflect situations to which they can relate?
- Will students be able to use the students' books/materials for personal study to help them to learn? Or are the contents suitable only to support lessons led by a teacher?
- Will teachers be able to use the books/materials in ways that suit the needs of different learners? For example, do the materials include activities on different levels? Are there extra challenges to extend more able students, and simplifications for those who learn less readily?
- Do the books/materials include any tests or assessments? If so, are these frequent enough to give teachers useful feedback on students' progress, without dominating the teaching programme? Will the outcomes help teachers to diagnose difficulties and structure learning?
- Do the tasks, activities or assessments require any special equipment? Will teachers have access to this equipment?
- Do the books contain activities and examples using ICT such as interactive whiteboards and mathematics software? Do the books suggest how to use databases and information from the Internet? Do the books for secondary students contain activities for graphics calculators?

Organisation of the content

- Is the progression of the content ordered in a way that will fit with your scheme of work, i.e. how you intend to teach the standards?
- Is it easy to find a particular section or reference in the book? For example, is there a table of contents or an index?
- Is there integration of theory and practice and is this in line with the school's teaching and learning policy?

Language demands

- Is the book written at an appropriate level for students' reading and comprehension abilities? This is particularly important in mathematics if the language of instruction is English.
- Are technical words defined in a glossary or explained when they are first introduced in the text?

Illustrations and examples

- Does the book use appropriate graphs, tables, diagrams, charts, sketches and/or photographs to explain the content?
- Are the illustrations and examples, and the layout of the pages, likely to appeal to and motivate students in the school, taking account of their age and gender?

Physical characteristics

- Is the size of the type, including captions and labels, clear?
- Are the books sufficiently hardwearing?
- Is the cost reasonable?