

September 4, 2019

Senator Mary B. Boren
Oklahoma State Senate
2300 North Lincoln Boulevard
Room 514.1
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Senator Boren:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide some additional information and our perspective on the challenges school districts continue to face regarding Instructional Material funding.

Since 1948, the state budget contained a line-item specifically for Instructional Materials. Of course, in 2008 that all changed.

Classroom Instruction Materials are second only to the teacher in the central role they play. Additionally, this is one of the few expenditures that directly benefits each child regardless of socio/economic background. Research has found that lack of IM funding leads to inequalities in the classroom.

It is now clear that while some more prosperous districts can find a way to purchase materials, more impoverished districts are unable to marshal the resources to locally fund their IM needs. Frequently, their only funding source is state IM funding.

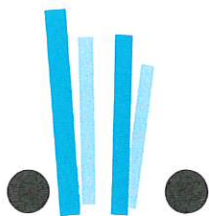
I have researched district purchases going back to 2006.

- For a baseline, I calculated 3-year average district purchases from 2006-2008. Thereafter, beginning in 2009 and through 2018, based on that figure, district purchases were down an average of 43% annually.
- As an example, for the 2016 reading adoption, district purchases were down 45 percent from the 2008 adoption. Double-digit declines have been the norm since 2009, with the exception of science which showed a small increase.

Even if the line-item was again restricted for only IM purchases, the current formula covers less than one-half of the current IM costs. It is important to note funding has not increased since at least 2001.

The funding challenges present additional issues that are less obvious -

Schools and districts need materials that are fully aligned with Oklahoma academic standards, which have changed. That often means significant revisions from standard editions. Without dedicated funding, publishers are reluctant to develop Oklahoma-specific materials. This results in fewer high-quality choices for districts.



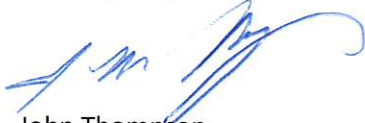
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The cost of creating state-specific materials, providing samples to over 1,700 schools, caravan participation, and calling on all the districts is a major financial commitment. If dedicated funding is not in place, the financial risk to the publisher is just too high. Thus, we are now seeing fewer choices for material that fully meets Oklahoma standards. This creates another challenge for teachers, as they must search out additional resources to teach our standards.

We all appreciate your focus on the issue. Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide.

Best regards,



John Thompson
President
Thompson School Book

