

TCAT Tales EXTRA

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It's NOT 'business as usual'

TCAT's best management practices for the new instructional materials era

EVERYTHING'S CHANGED: With the passage of Senate Bill 6, signed into law July 19, the way that Texas schools order and account for instructional materials changes dramatically. The Texas Education Agency briefed TCAT leaders on the new system July 25, and an ad hoc TCAT committee developed these recommendations for coordinators. T.E.A. plans to open EMAT, the on-line ordering system, Aug. 8.

Recommendation 1: Hold your fire

EMAT may open Aug. 8, but districts and open-enrollment charter schools should get a better feel for the ramifications of the new law before placing orders.

Yes, the publishers' sales people are trying to stampede schools into placing orders. Their marketing departments want to know how this new law is going to affect them, too. That's not our problem.

At this point, there are a lot of unknowns. It will be difficult to cancel orders. Once you spend your biennial Instructional Materials Account allotment, you're not going to get any more money until 2013.

Recommendation 2: First thing first

Evaluate the immediate needs of the district and costs associated with these needs. Here is the order that will be required in EMAT and the order that decisions should be reached:

- Software needs: Continuing subscriptions and classroom subscriptions; Will these subscriptions be used next school year? Will classroom subscriptions be utilized by the district or is this software located at specific campuses?
- New/Continuing adoption: What products are needed to meet the new end-of-course test requirements? What products already in inventory can be used to meet the TEKS?

- Supplemental: During the school year, what supplemental materials, such as Commissioner's List and Open Source, will become available?

Recommendation 3: Lead your team

More than ever before, ordering instructional materials has become a team effort, and the textbook coordinator has to take the initiative to bring that team together.

Ideally, each district and open-enrollment charter school (OECS) should create an **Instructional Materials Oversight Committee** to bring together representatives from Curriculum, Technology, Purchasing and Finance to develop a coordinated approach. Before a coordinator places any orders through EMAT, each committee member should sign off on the decisions made by the group.

If an IMOC is not practical for 2011, the coordinator should try to arrange a meeting of all the representatives. If that can't work, the coordinator should at least meet with each area.

Here are some of the issues that will face the instructional materials stakeholders:

Curriculum Department

- a) New adoption: What are classroom and teacher needs, as opposed to "wants?"
- b) What to buy: Determine the best mix of class sets vs. 1-to-1 students ratio.
- c) What is the curriculum structure – departmentalized or self-contained classes? What grade levels are affected?

Technology

- a) What are the plans for classroom software and hardware to run instructional materials?

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YOUR SCHOOL'S INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS COORDINATOR NEEDS TO SEE THIS!

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TCAT's best management practices

From the front page

- b) What software is utilized and what software will no longer be used in the classroom?
- c) The science supplement is on-line only; what (if anything) do classrooms and teachers need to access instructional materials?

Purchasing

- a) How will purchase orders for disbursements be handled?
- b) Are district purchasing guidelines being followed?

Finance

- a) T.E.A. will disburse monies to the district or OECS for instructional materials, instructional materials technology and eligible technology salaries. How will the school assure that the funds are transferred to the district to appropriate account(s)?
- b) Instructional materials become the property of the district or OECS. When those materials are sold, the proceeds must be used as if they were IMA funds. Are the proper controls in place?
- c) How will you make sure accountability is followed based on legal and local board policy?

Recommendation 4: Don't spend it all

Determine a percentage that you'll keep in your IMA for emergency needs. Senate Bill 6 was only the start. Over the next six to nine months, T.E.A. Commissioner Robert Scott and his staff will be developing rules that will elaborate on (translation: "change") the system.

WHEN EMAT OPENS: At presstime, T.E.A. officials were still calculating the amounts that local districts and open-enrollment charter schools would have for their first IMA balance. As TCAT recommended to the Legislature, any credit amount from the old system will carry over into the new instructional materials account.

The first requirement before ordering will be confirming the schools' contact and address information. After that, and before ordering, the school will be required to certify its Allotment Funds. In future years, the certification will be a part of the Local Board of Trustees Certification Form.

Senior administration officials should be consulted before certification. In subsequent years, schools may request an adjustment of the number of students used to calculate the allotment by May 31. This year, the law was passed after May 31.

**Come to the TCAT Annual Conference, Dec. 4-7
Embassy Suites Hotel/Convention Center, San Marcos**

T.E.A. and TCAT veterans will provide more guidance.

For conference details and to register, go to www.tcat.org.

THE EXCEPTION: One component of instructional materials remains substantially the same. Materials for visually impaired students are purchased by the state, not through a school's IMA, and EMAT was open for ordering EVI materials before the official Aug. 8 opening date.