

# Core Advocate Webinar

## Instructional Materials Make a Difference

May 24, 2016

The logo for Student Achievement Partners, featuring the text "STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS" in white, uppercase letters on a dark green rectangular background.

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### Scenario 1

The Peach Tree School District was enthusiastic about the new standards from the beginning. It was a midsized district with a large population of English Language Learners and even before the roll out of new standards, the district leadership had been talking about the need to raise the bar and ensure that all students were exposed to rigorous instructional materials. As soon as they had the wherewithal, they went through a procurement process and bought math and ELA materials hot off the presses, all clearly labeled aligned to the Florida standards. Teachers were glad to get the new textbooks but were mildly surprised that they looked and felt fairly similar to the old materials. The ELA materials definitely had more non-fiction, for example, but many of the questions and tasks felt very similar to the ones they'd seen in prior textbooks. Math teachers reported that they could see that the mathematical practices were more clearly represented in the new textbooks, but they noted that there were still a tremendous number of topics and concepts to cover every year, which made it hard to see how they would ever go deep. In some ways, implementation was easy because the materials were so similar, but now three years in, teachers and administrators were disappointed to see no evidence of better outcomes for students, either in testing or in their classwork across the year. Teachers began to question whether these new standards were doing any good at all. The district brought in an outside evaluator who reviewed the textbooks and discovered they are pretty significantly out of alignment with the standards. Now the district has spent three years using the textbooks and do not have funds to purchase new materials for another two years.

\* What could you do to support the work in this district?

## Scenario 2

Brimley Canyon School District has closely followed information released about instructional materials and the Common Core, including EdReports' release of math reviews last year that indicated only one product was fully aligned to standards. For that reason, they postponed purchasing anything and have done significant work with district teachers to supplement their old materials. While some teachers were frustrated with the delayed purchasing, the collaborative work was a good way to make sure teachers could talk to each other about what alignment looks like, where the current materials fall short, and what supplements would solve their problems.

But finally this spring, the district is going to purchase new K-8 materials in math and ELA. Teachers received a memo noting that the procurement process was moving forward and that teachers and parents would have two hours one evening at the end of May to review the recommended materials and offer comments before the district went forward with contracting. The procurement office has a wealth of experience in procuring materials but has no internal content expertise. They have ensured that a couple district math experts and a couple district ELA experts were involved in looking at excerpts from each of the textbooks under consideration.

\* What could you do to support the work in this district?

### Scenario 3

Western Regional School District prided itself on respecting the authority and expertise of teachers in the district. For that reason, they have emphasized the importance of teachers' freedom to develop their own scope and sequence and teach the things that inspire them most. One teacher who loves Shakespeare has his seventh graders spend a full semester on The Bard, parsing his sonnets, learning how to curse in Elizabethan English, and producing A Midsummer Night's Dream. Many high school and college students have vivid memories of that experience! One of the high school math teachers is passionate about making sure that students understand the math around personal finance and delves deeply into how credit cards work, what compound interest means, and why the lottery is a waste of the dollar and the dream. The district used to perform pretty well overall on their state standardized tests, though they've always struggled with their small group of economically disadvantaged students. However, with the new more rigorous testing, they have seen an overall drop in scores as well as lots of differences across classrooms. Teachers are in very different places in their thinking about this issue. Some teachers think that the district should provide a consistent set of materials for teachers. Others are worried that the expectation will be that those materials are used as a script and that their job will become to read a script instead of teaching.

\* What could you do to support the work in this district?