Glen Price Group

California School Districts'

Perspectives on K–8 Math Instructional Materials Adoption and Implementation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAY 2026

Executive Summary

California has significant room to grow in math achievement, with statewide math scores below the national average and an opportunity to close persistent gaps across student groups. Research shows that high-quality instructional materials support student outcomes.[1] The State Board of Education (SBE) is responsible for supporting district selection and implementation of high-quality math instructional materials. In this role, the SBE revised the Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools (Math Framework) and published a new framework in 2023, also releasing a new list of state-approved math instructional materials in 2025. California school districts are required under California Education Code (EC) to adopt and implement math instructional materials aligned with current state standards and consistent with the newly adopted Math Framework.

To understand how California districts are responding to these changes, this report answers key questions about how they approach adoption and implementation of elementary and middle school (K-8) math instructional materials in alignment with the 2023 Math Framework. Based on intentional interest holder engagement and research, this report elevates what supports, resources, and types of assistance would best facilitate successful adoption and implementation of high-quality math instructional materials for California's teachers, students, and families.

This research included a landscape analysis (literature and artifact review), ten discovery interviews with educational leaders, and survey responses and interviews with 45 school districts. Participating districts represented over one million California students (1,080,079 student enrollment in 2024-2025) and included districts with large enrollment and high percentages of Black students, Latinx students, and students who are eligible for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM).

Key Findings

Adoption Process

The majority of districts (71%) reported their math instructional materials **had been in use for at least six years.** An even larger share of districts (81%) were in the midst of an adoption process or anticipating starting an adoption process prior to the 2027-2028 school year. Among these districts, **64% are in the early phases of the adoption process.**

- When asked which specific factors were important to the assessment of math instructional materials, most districts ranked the following as important: **alignment with district goals, teacher/staff perceptions of math instructional materials quality, EdReports ratings, and readiness of materials to implement.**
- The most common mechanisms for soliciting input and feedback from teachers and administrators involved **adoption committee participation** and the **piloting of math instructional materials,** either through committee participation or as active participants in piloting work. Most districts reported an **intention to utilize more than one method to solicit teacher and administrator input.**
- Districts **also noted the value of soliciting input** not only from educators, but **from the students, families, and communities** they serve. Methods of engagement districts used included surveys, meetings, or events for community members to learn about materials and offer feedback, and participation in the piloting phase.

1 *Why Materials Matter.* EdReports. Retrieved January 5, 2026, from https://edreports.org/impact/why-materials-matter

Adoption Assistance

Districts shared a variety of resources and supports they are using or planning to use to inform their K-8 math instructional materials adoption process.

- Districts noted the importance of several resources, including **the Math Framework, County Office of Education (COE) support, and EdReports.** Collaborative networks and peer learning opportunities as well as meetings with vendors were reported as additional sources of support by some.
- Approximately one third of districts requested access to more resources to help vet math instructional materials.
- Despite no dedicated funding from the state for adoption, **only six districts indicated funding as an area of need** — specifically funding to compensate advisory board members, hire substitutes so that teachers can engage in professional learning, and to support math instructional materials piloting. A few districts mentioned that greater access to training opportunities and partnerships or networks focused on math instructional materials adoption would be helpful.

Implementation

Overall, while **most districts reported that they employ similar strategies for adoption** (as described above), **the implementation of instructional materials varied widely.**

- The majority of districts provided some professional learning or coaching opportunities to support math instructional materials implementation. However, among districts that provided professional learning only 12 (28%) explicitly referenced **ongoing professional learning.**
- The majority of districts reported **relying on publishers and in-house district staff to provide curriculum-based professional learning.** Most of these districts utilized both, rather than keeping all professional learning in-house or relying solely on publishers. A smaller number of districts **also relied on their COE or other external providers** to meet their professional learning needs. When GPG asked explicitly about access to external providers, most districts reported both access to and use of these providers. Among districts that don't have access, three shared that they would use external professional learning providers if they could; and only one shared that they wouldn't use external providers even with access.
- When asked about the limitations and challenges districts face in providing professional learning, many described **a lack of time** (either because of limited professional learning days or because of the inability to remove teachers from the classroom), **a lack of substitute teachers** to create time for teachers to engage in professional learning, and **difficulty shifting teacher mindsets.** Fewer districts elevated costs as a primary limitation or challenge, though other limitations such as the substitute teacher pool could be linked to budget constraints and potentially alleviated by additional funding. A quarter of districts (11, 28%) reported no limitations or challenges, or were uncertain of what their challenges might be.

Implementation Assistance

District responses revealed an implementation capacity gap. Districts know what good implementation requires (coaching, time, ongoing professional learning, leadership development) but lack the resources to provide it at scale.

- Districts were explicitly asked about what additional services, resources, or supports would help them effectively implement K-8 math instructional materials in the future. Districts had varied perspectives, but some trends emerged, with districts commonly requesting support to address **funding challenges** (8, 26%), usually in reference to another specific need (e.g. coaching or release time for teachers). As one district put it, it **"always comes down to money."** Support to ensure the participation of all teachers in professional learning, including **release time and substitute coverage** (8, 26%); and, support for **ongoing professional learning,** rather than one-off or short-term (e.g. first year only) training (6, 19%) were also trends.
- Some districts shared a desire for support to implement **coaching or train-the-trainer models** (6, 19%). Districts also asked for **implementation monitoring tools** (e.g. rubrics, walkthrough models, reflection tools, or administrator feedback systems) (6, 19%) and **implementation support tools** (e.g. pacing guides or model lessons) (7, 23%). Less common, but still notable requests included support for **collection and analysis of student assessment data** (5, 16%) and expanded access to **publisher support** (3, 10%), including for ongoing professional learning.

Opportunities for Impact

Findings suggest a number of opportunities for philanthropy; the State Board of Education (SBE); the California Department of Education (CDE); and statewide, regional, and local training and technical assistance providers to impact district adoption and implementation processes, and ultimately student outcomes, as districts enter the next chapter of K-8 math instructional materials adoption and implementation in alignment with the 2023 Math Framework.

Strategic Partnerships

An array of statewide, regional, and county intermediaries support districts on myriad topics and in some cases have supported district K-8 math instructional materials adoption processes already. Philanthropy has also invested in developing partnerships, engaging external consultants, and creating networks to support district selection of high-quality math instructional materials. Our findings suggest **this infrastructure can and should be leveraged to continue supporting peer learning and innovation** among districts, especially as more districts move into piloting, formal adoption, and implementation of new math instructional materials.

Instructional Networks

1. **Opportunity:** Build on the success of the math instructional networks focused on adoption support by extending existing networks and creating new networks to support piloting and implementation. Implementation networks could provide opportunities for districts to learn from experts and each other about high-impact professional learning strategies and innovative approaches to navigating resource constraints.
2. **Opportunity:** Support math instructional network leaders or external consultants to design and provide a large scale webinar or video series to ensure wider dissemination of the tools and strategies these networks can provide.

Statewide, Regional, and Local Leaders

3. **Opportunity:** Build the capacity of COEs, individually, or as part of the Statewide System of Support (SSOS) to support district selection, piloting, and implementation of high-quality math instructional materials.

4. **Opportunity:** Equip COEs to develop resources (e.g. tools and templates) that address their local context and facilitate peer learning opportunities for their districts by:

    a. Convening a learning community for COE staff to share best practices and build capacity to facilitate deep learning about math instructional materials among their districts;

    b. Supporting COEs to convene communities of practice, composed of district teams to learn from and support each other in their math instructional materials adoption and implementation efforts; and

    c. Establishing a Networked Instructional Community (similar to the California Central Valley NIC[2]) of COEs to work with implementation science experts and implement continuous improvement (i.e., plan-do-study-act) cycles to improve their support for K-8 high-quality math instructional materials implementation and adoption at the district level.

Publishers

5. **Opportunity:** Work directly with publishers to build their capacity to provide ongoing professional learning and to refine professional learning opportunities to reflect the context of California, and to the extent possible, the context of individual districts.

6. **Opportunity:** Work with a select group of publishers of high-quality K-8 math instructional materials to develop curriculum-aligned professional development plans, modules, and other resources that districts can implement within their own internal professional learning infrastructure.

Additional Resources

Assessment Templates and Visuals

7. **Opportunity:** Support the CDE, in partnership with an external consultant or by funding a Curriculum Fellow through the CDE Foundation, to create and disseminate a toolkit and corresponding visual that supports deeper understanding of the five criteria of the Math Framework and why they are important for student learning.

8. **Opportunity:** Support the CDE, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), or another statewide agency, in partnership with an external consultant or by funding a Curriculum Fellow through the CDE Foundation, to conduct deeper evaluations of math instructional materials across the five criteria of the Math Framework and develop a matrix or other tool to support district decision-making.

9. **Opportunity:** Create a tool, to supplement EdReports, that assists districts in narrowing the list of options based on specific district priorities. For example, this tool could help districts identify which math instructional materials support English learners (including whether they offer materials in Spanish or other commonly spoken languages in California), support students with disabilities, and include Transitional Kindergarten (TK) with effective vertical alignment.

10. **Opportunity:** Establish statewide or regional learning communities with affinity groups for districts in different stages of instructional material selection and the implementation process. Support districts to document their steps, in conjunction with the learning community, to support sustainability of high-quality selection and implementation practices in the future. Disseminate best practices and lessons learned. Also see opportunity 4.

2 *Central Valley Networked Improvement Community.* ERS Connect. Retrieved January 5, 2026, from https://sites.google.com/ersconnect.org/centralvalleynic

Financial Resources

11. **Opportunity:** Support an advocacy campaign to educate the legislature about the need and potential impact of additional funding for districts to adopt and implement (especially to provide curriculum-based ongoing professional learning) high-quality math instructional materials.

Communications for Awareness Building

12. **Opportunity:** Build awareness of existing tools, templates, resources, and opportunities, through effective communications with teachers, administrators, professional development providers, and other intermediaries. Communicate through trusted sources, including op-eds in education publications; presence at education conferences; and listserv announcements in collaboration with state agencies and intermediaries, COEs, and other partners.

13. **Opportunity:** Develop an annotated resource inventory to describe and link to existing resources, networks, and technical assistance providers. Disseminate the inventory through an online resource hub, such as California Educators Together, which can be used to facilitate discussion groups, channels, and message boards to support greater connection and cross sharing among districts.

Future Research Opportunities

The districts that shared information to inform this study are just a sample of the California school landscape, and their adoption and implementation efforts do not exist inside a vacuum. Working with state education associations would serve to situate the opportunities identified above in the broader context of California's education system. Education associations including but not limited to the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), serve as trusted messengers to their constituencies. The following areas of inquiry could also improve our understanding of how to support effective adoption and implementation of high-quality math instructional materials:

1. **Research Opportunity:** Identify and map the math instructional networks, initiatives, and other structures that have been developed to support math instructional materials adoption and implementation to identify redundancies, ensure districts know what resources are available, and provide districts more guidance and support.

2. **Research Opportunity:** Conduct case studies of the adoption processes undertaken by specific districts, including participation in math instructional networks, to highlight "bright spots," elevate how districts address specific priorities (such as supporting English learners) and put forward models for community-based adoption and peer learning opportunities that advance district goals and support effective implementation.

3. **Research Opportunity:** Study innovative practices to embed professional learning into existing structures (e.g., planning time or existing professional learning communities), including the use of technology, such as virtual peer learning communities and professional learning or lesson model apps; inquiry cycles; cross-grade collaboration; and other potential strategies to increase opportunities for curriculum-based, ongoing professional learning without the need for substantial additional funding.

4. **Research Opportunity:** Identify low- and no-cost strategies that help districts select high-quality K-8 math instructional materials, test the identified strategies with a set of pilot districts, and promote the results and lessons learned at scale.

5. **Research Opportunity:** Fund a research project, similar to this study, that targets smaller districts and/or charter schools across different regions of the state to understand how their experience differs from larger districts and identify any common needs and opportunities that could be pursued in support of all districts in California.

Next Steps

Findings demonstrate that for many districts in California serving large populations of FRPM qualifying students and Black or Latinx students, K-8 math instructional materials adoption and implementation are top of mind. One statewide leader described this unique work as "a strategic opportunity to truly align instruction with a really bold vision — equity centered — of math instruction." Districts must find a balance between their strategic priorities, available support and guidance, and their fiscal reality to make changes that achieve meaningful improvement for students' math learning.

The time is right to support the effective adoption and implementation of high-quality K-8 math instructional materials across California. While many districts have initiated processes of selecting and adopting new math instructional materials, they are still in need of support and guidance as they continue this process and transition to implementation. In addition, there are many districts who plan to initiate their adoption processes in the coming years and could benefit from future guidance and support. For those districts who have not yet begun to implement these new K-8 math instructional materials, this research highlights a critical window of opportunity for assistance to improve the effectiveness of implementation and ultimately student outcomes.

Philanthropy has the potential to act as an essential catalyst by addressing the opportunities for impact identified in this report. Strategic investments, paired with rigorous evaluation, have the potential to demonstrate measurable improvements in district adoption and implementation of high-quality math instructional materials, teacher capacity, and student outcomes. In addition, this work can help build the necessary evidence base to effectively advocate for and secure sustained, systemic investments in the future.

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