



IMCAT

'Delivering the Future'

Legislative Goals - 2017

The mission of the Instructional Materials Coordinators' Association of Texas (IMCAT) is to support instructional materials professionals so that the schoolchildren of Texas receive the materials they need.

In furtherance of its mission, IMCAT will actively participate in dialogues at the State Capitol, at the State Board of Education and at the Texas Education Agency to advance the interests of schoolchildren and their instructional materials needs.

In preparation for the Texas Legislature's 85th Regular Session, IMCAT has developed the following positions.

- **Support and encourage filing of legislation to restore additional funds for a Technology Allotment**

Background: With the landmark Senate Bill 6 in 2011, the Legislature eliminated the \$30/student/year allotment to Texas schools to purchase technology, such as computer hardware and broadband wiring. The fund had been separate from the funding for instructional materials.

So, in spite of SB6's creation of the Instructional Materials Allotment for textbooks, instructional software and technology that supported instructional content, Texas schools "started out \$300 million in the hole," as one SBOE member observed. That hole has never been filled.

IMCAT supports a restoration of the Tech Allotment of \$30/student/year, above and separate from the Instructional Materials Allotment.

Some have argued that, in their exercise of local control, school districts and open enrollment charter schools have not used all their Instructional Materials Allotment, so no further funding is necessary. This is as short-sighted as it is inaccurate. Many districts, especially smaller districts, have no IMA funds left for any materials, including technology.

The local decision to maintain an IMA surplus may have many roots.

1) Timing. Districts may be required to place their orders for instructional materials before the Legislature approves the 2017-2019 budget and before 2017-2018 funds become available Sept. 1, 2017. Even with delayed payment options, districts are limited to spending 80 percent of their IMA before Sept. 1 in anticipation of IMA funds arriving after that date. Some schools have determined to keep a surplus to pay for all or part of orders the place before the budget year starts.

2) Advance Planning. Texas schools face a huge English/Language Arts adoption soon. Some schools may be building up their surplus to make sure they have enough funds when those bills come in.

3) Caution. Even with the Texas Supreme Court's decision upholding the current method of school finance, the Legislature faces a tight budget, and there have been discussions of a raid on IMA funds to pay for high-tech initiatives unrelated to educational content. With such uncertainty, local districts may have banked their IMA funds to make sure they're there when they're needed.



IMCAT

'Delivering the Future'

Legislative Goals - 2017

- **Support legislation to establish a study for efficiency in electronic instructional materials**

Background: With the encouragement of the Legislature, the Texas Education Agency and its own curriculum experts, Texas schools have pushed resolutely into blended learning – mixing hard-copy instructional materials with online offerings. Publishers, like the rest of society, have struggled to keep up with the technological changes and the implications, not only for pedagogy, but for the publishers' business models.

With constrictions on funding, it's absolutely necessary that local schools have the tools to monitor and improve the educational software in use in Texas classrooms.

IMCAT supports legislation requiring the Commissioner of Education to establish a panel of stakeholders to review and recommend policies and procedures to maximize the effectiveness of educational software.

The task force will review and make recommendations on topics, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Licensing, including the timing of purchase, charging for unused accounts, and availability of login access during the term of the state contract.
- 2) Usage reports that detail when, where, and how much time students and teachers are spending in publisher learning platforms. Are they utilizing assessments, ebooks, or videos? These reports should be available to appropriate school officials and/or the Texas Education Agency.
- 3) Term of use, including whether schools that do not use purchased licenses must be afforded a refund or credit for purchases in subsequent school years.

The task force will be comprised of:

- 1) Two representatives of the Commissioner of Education;
- 2) Two representatives of the State Board of Education;
- 3) Two representatives of the publishers operating in the State;
- 4) Two representatives of schools' chief technology officers;
- 5) Two representatives of schools' instructional materials coordinators; and
- 6) Two representatives of school curriculum departments.

The Commissioner shall report the recommendations of the task force to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House of Representatives prior to the 86th Legislature.



IMCAT

'Delivering the Future'

Legislative Goals - 2017

- **Propose and support legislation to clarify calculation of Instructional Materials Allotments**

Background: House Bill 5, passed in 2013, required Texas school districts to partner with institutions of higher learning to provide Advanced Placement courses for high school students to earn college credit. In a classic “**unfunded mandate**,” Section 28.014 of the Education Code requires each school district “in consultation with each institution of higher education with which the district partners, shall develop or purchase instructional materials for a course developed under this section consistent with Chapter 31. The instructional materials must include technology resources that enhance the effectiveness of the course and draw on established best practices.”

Of course, college instructional materials expenses are routinely more expensive than public school materials, and districts are depleting their IMA funds to pay for the high-priced materials.

In spite of the statewide requirement, the Texas Education Agency does not include AP books in its calculation of the per-capita Instructional Materials Allotment.

IMCAT seeks introduction of legislation to specify the calculation of costs for future proclamations and require the Commissioner of Education to post the formulae and other methodology used in determining the Instructional Materials Allotment on the Texas Education Agency website, prior to the T.E.A. notification of districts of their allotments.

IMCAT also supports legislation requiring the State to pay for AP books as it does for Accessible Materials.

- **Oppose legislation to raid the Instructional Material Fund to pay for broadband access**

Background: Governor Abbott has identified the need for broadband access for public schools. He and his staff have worked with a firm called EducationSuperHighway. In partnership with the Governor’s Office, the Texas Education Agency, Education Service Centers, the service provider community, and schools across the state, Education Super-Highway “will create an action plan that ensures scalable, robust, and affordable access to high-speed broadband for all Texas school districts. At the same time, EducationSuperHighway network experts will begin working with the nearly 1,000 schools that currently lack access to high-speed fiber to help them attain fiber connections that are scalable and affordable,” according to a release from the Governor’s office.

While broadband access through fiber optics is, of course, laudable, the question is whether the Instructional Material Fund should be used for infrastructure rather than instructional materials.

IMCAT encourages lawmakers to look for other sources of funding (i.e. the National Telecommunications and Information Administration) instead of the already limited Instructional Materials Fund.