

## BACKGROUND:

TEXTBOOK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS POLICY 4.100 states that, “No local school board or publisher may participate in a pilot program of materials being considered for adoption during the 18-month period before the official adoption of the materials by the State Textbook Commission. Despite that long-standing policy, districts in SCORE’s LIFT network were permitted to continue pilots using **Amplify, El Education and Great Minds Wit and Wisdom** throughout 2018 and straight through the adoption process. (See LIFT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS GUIDEBOOK )

While LIFT-piloted curricula **Amplify, El Education and Wit & Wisdom** failed almost 100% of grade bands in Tennessee’s **first and second** rounds of textbook reviews conducted by Tennessee teachers, these materials still appeared on the state’s approved list after review scores were overridden by the Department of Education.

## TIMELINE OF CHANGES:

### June 1, 2019

**Textbook reviewers submitted their first “test review” of a textbook to the Commissioner.** This would be the first date TDOE would see that their preferred HQIMs were not likely to make it on the approved list.

### June 3, 2019

**Two days after the results of the test reviews were known to the Department,** they notified publishers of an “update to the scoring protocol” that would make it harder to fail a textbook. Previously, if a majority of reviewers of a textbook (3/5) failed **any section of the book**, then the entire book failed. Based on the new rules set to go into effect one week later, a majority of reviewers (3/5) must **fail the same section** of that book before it could be failed.

### June 11, 2019

The new scoring changes were added to the 6/11 Textbook Commission meeting agenda and were adopted.

### July 2, 2019

The final results of the **first round** of textbook reviews were made known to the Commissioner and to publishers. All three of the programs used in SCORE’s pilot districts received failing scores:

- CKLA Amplify failed all grades 1-8 except grade 4;
- Great Minds Wit and Wisdom failed all grades 1-12 except grade 7;
- Open Up El Education failed all grades 1-5;

### August - September 2019

Commissioner Schwinn replaced Lacey Noel as textbook coordinator, hired Lisa Coons, then unilaterally took the following actions without authorization of the Textbook Commission:

- **Halted the textbook review process indefinitely** just days before the approved calendar said it was to conclude, despite Commission Rule 0520-05-01-.10 (5) that states that the review process *must align* with the timeline approved by the Commission. Department officials argued that, as long as they met *the last date* shown on the calendar, they were still in compliance with regulation. Multiple publishers were disadvantaged by the Department’s actions and complained to textbook officials;
- **Commissioned, without properly bidding,** a Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy review of the quality of scoring produced by Tennessee’s first-round textbook reviewers. Per the Institute’s website, they are an **official partner of CKLA Amplify and Great Minds Wit and Wisdom** – two of the three programs favored by the Department and SCORE;

- **Dismissed all first-round reviewers** based on advice from Johns Hopkins;
- **Created new criteria** for hiring new reviewers. First-round reviewers could only be hired back if they passed “a more rigorous” reviewer test written by the Department;
- **Recruited new reviewers** to apply for second round re-reviews, and **set new test “cut scores”** to weed out reviewers deemed unacceptable by the Department;
- **Selected new reviewers** to complete the second round - or “re-reviews” -- with the assistance of Commission Chairman Neil Durbin. Note that Durbin, also Director of Schools for Dyersburg City, never disclosed that his own **district was engaged in a pilot using EL Education** curriculum, one of the three preferred by SCORE and a beneficiary of the Department’s adjustment of review scores;
- **TDOE trained new reviewers** using “ELA experts to teach how to review and score using the rubric”;
- **Directed that second-round reviews be conducted “as a group” and in the presence of department officials**, contrary to the prior practice of reviewing materials independently and from a remote location. Asst. Commissioner Coons claims that reviewers “maintained their independence” even while being monitored and directed by the Department.
- **Overrode second-round failing review scores for CKLA Amplify, EL Education and most grade bands of Wit and Wisdom**. Department officials simply declared the materials “passed” in the absence of passing scores and added them to the approved list;
- **Created**, after State Board acceptance of the approved list, **a new waiver process** to benefit the still-failed grade bands of Wit and Wisdom and EL Education. In all, **72 district waivers were granted to encourage districts to adopt the maximum number of unapproved, preferred materials**. In stark contrast, the previous Social Studies adoption saw only three districts request waivers.
- **Granted over 70 waivers for previously unapproved materials.**