

Michigan

High Quality Instructional Materials



The first guiding principle in Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan is that “all students have access to high-quality instruction.”¹ In order to deliver high-quality instruction, schools need two things: high-quality teachers and high-quality instructional material (HQIM).

“When teachers have high-quality instructional materials ... they can focus their time and energy on addressing the individual needs of each student,”² wrote Delsa D. Chapman, Michigan’s Deputy Superintendent Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports.

But finding HQIM that meets Michigan’s standards can sometimes be difficult.

In Michigan, HQIMs are defined as having three parts. First, they must be aligned with research on educational instruction. Second, they must be aligned to state standards. Third, they must contain “instructional strategies that are appropriate for a given age group or grade level.”³

Some teachers try to find HQIM by either searching for material online or creating their own from scratch. Both approaches show teachers’ dedication, putting in extra time to meet the needs of their students. The problem is, online and self-made materials do not always meet state standards, they are often not vetted for accuracy, and they often do not follow the best instructional research.

According to one study cited by the Michigan Department of Education, for many supplemental materials “clarity and instructional guidance for teachers are weak, and many resources fail to align to the academic standards to which they claim alignment.”⁴

What this means is that HQIMs must go far beyond material that one can find online. They must include not just the student lesson materials, but also teacher support materials that follow the best educational research.

One popular HQIM nationally is the social studies, science, and wellness curricula offered by Studies Weekly. The Studies Weekly student edition is a

year-long colorful, newspaper-style consumable that can be sent home each week or can be highlighted and cut and glued into interactive notebooks.

Standards Alignment

Each Studies Weekly publication contains articles and other content including rich images and graphics to support student understanding, all of which is aligned to Michigan state standards. Documents that show this alignment are available upon request.

U1.3 African Life Before the 16th Century

Describe the lives of peoples living in West Africa prior to the 16th century.

5 – U1.3.1 Use maps to locate the major regions of Africa (North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa).

5 – U1.3.2 Describe the life and cultural development of people living in West Africa before the 16th century with respect to economic (the ways people made a living) and family structures, and the growth of states, towns, and trade.



Studies Weekly also follows the C3 Framework for Social Studies. As Michigan’s state standards document says, “Inquiry should be a primary form of instruction in all social studies classes.”⁵ The Studies Weekly fourth grade publication starts out with five weeks on inquiry, including weeks on “Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries,” “Sources for Inquiry,” “Evaluating Sources and Interpreting Information,” “Communicating Conclusions,” and “Engaging in Your Own Inquiry.” Each unit is guided by a compelling question, such as “Why do people create governments?” and “How has Michigan’s location affected its development?”

Inquiry is also a part of Studies Weekly assessments.

Weekly Question: Why do people create governments?

Supporting Questions:

- What do governments do?
- What do people want from their governments?

But Studies Weekly goes far beyond covering state standards and approaching content through the C3 Framework. It is also rich in research-based teacher support.

While the Student Edition is manageable for the time and age-level of students, the Teacher Edition often contains dozens of pages, providing background knowledge, vocabulary words, lesson plans, activities, reteaching strategies, ELA connections, assessments, and even videos. These give the teacher an abundance of material to work with as they strive to create an “inspiring, engaging, and caring learning environment”⁶ for their students.

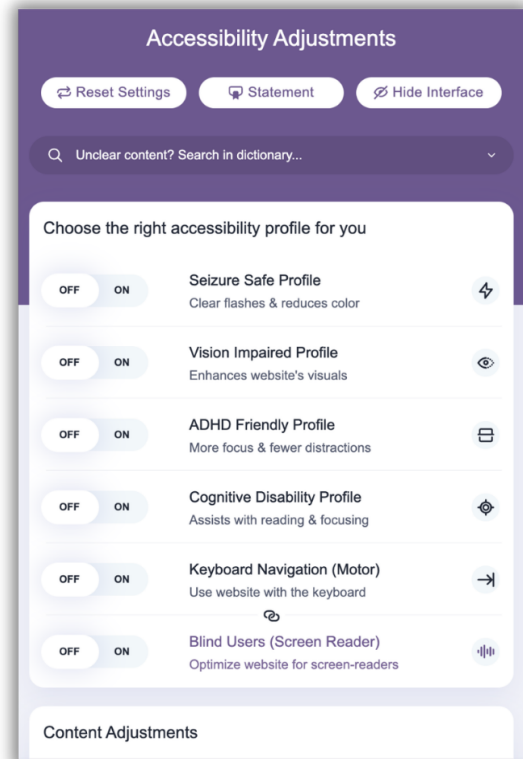
Evidence-based instructional strategies and embedded formative assessments

Studies Weekly bases its instructional strategies on the research of John Hattie, Timothy Shanahan, Jeff Zwires, and others. Following John Hattie’s lead, Studies Weekly tailors its publications to students’ cognitive development stage, builds in opportunities for classroom discussion and questioning, and provides explicit teaching and direct instruction.

Using Timothy Shanahan’s research, Studies Weekly combines reading and writing to build up students’ knowledge and facility in both. Jeff Zwires has found that building up a student’s linguistic and rhetorical ability to participate in discipline-specific academic discourse is an excellent route to learning. Studies Weekly provides many opportunities to learn discipline-specific vocabulary and the structures a discipline uses to frame knowledge.

As students make their way through Studies Weekly material online, they encounter embedded formative assessments that help them recall and solidify their learning. The assessments also help teachers to keep track of each student’s progress.

Following Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan’s principle “to close student achievement and opportunity gaps,” Studies Weekly also offers a customizable-by-student suite of tools so that the online platform can provide additional supports such as a variable-speed audio reader or ADHD-focused reading panels.



Studies Weekly also offers many reteaching options to help teachers reach all their students effectively and efficiently.

Studies Weekly shares Michigan’s dedication to student success and strives to be the best among HQIM. As an all-in-one curriculum product for social studies, we draw from decades of experience, the latest research, and a passion for education.

¹ Michigan Department of Education, *Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan*, https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/top10/top_10_mi_strategic_ed_plan_promising_practices_1_pager.pdf.

² Delsa D. Chapman, "Guidance on Reviewing, Selecting, and Implementing High-Quality Instructional Literacy Materials," letter to local and intermediate school district superintendents and public school academy directors, February 16, 2023, Michigan Department of Education, <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Memos/2023/02/Guidance-High-Quality-Instructional-Literacy-Materials.pdf>.

³ Tanya S. Wright, et al., "What Resources do Elementary Teachers Use for English Language Arts Instruction? The K-5 ELA Curriculum Landscape in Michigan," Education Policy Innovation Collaborative, Sep. 2022, p. 14. https://epicedpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/RBG3_Curriculum_PolBrief_Sept2022.pdf.

⁴ Morgan Polikoff, Jennifer Dean, "The Supplemental Curriculum Bazaar: Is What's Online Any Good?" Thomas B. Fordham Institute, <https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/20191210-supplemental-curriculum-bazaar0.pdf>.

⁵ Michigan K–12 Standards: Social Studies, Michigan Department of Education, p. 5, https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Academic-Standards/Social_Studies_Standards.pdf.

⁶ Michigan Department of Education, *Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan*.