

Frequently Asked Questions 2019-20 ELA Textbook Waivers

This document summarizes frequently asked questions that the department has received about the 2019-20 textbook waiver application process. Many of these questions are also reviewed in a [recording of a webinar about this process available here](#).

Please reach out to Lisa.Coons@tn.gov with additional questions.

1. What is the purpose of a textbook waiver application?

The intent of the textbook waiver application is to provide districts with the opportunity to explain unique and unusual needs regarding materials that they believe the traditional, local adoption process cannot best meet.

This waiver application is in compliance with [T.C.A. §49-6-2206](#): "Upon application of the local board of education, the commissioner of education may waive this restriction when, in the commissioner's judgment, the unique or unusual needs of the school system require it."

2. Does every district need to complete a waiver application?

No. Only districts that are experiencing unique and individual situations with their 2020 ELA adoptions should complete a waiver application. (Waivers should only be completed for K-12 core ELA coursework. High school electives such as Etymology or Morphology, will have a separate waiver application in the spring).

Districts that intend to proceed with a traditional, local adoption do **not** need to complete a waiver.

3. How do I know if my district needs to complete a waiver application?

A 2020 ELA adoption waiver application should be completed if districts are in one of two situations:

1. A district feels strongly about a material they have been using for multiple years and would like to continue to use that material.
2. A district uses district-created instructional materials to compose the majority of a grade-level instructional curriculum.

Districts should only submit a waiver application if they have a unique and unusual situation with a suite of grade-level ELA materials, not for supplemental materials they use to support primary curriculum. For example, if a district used the Teaching Literacy in Tennessee Unit Starters and supplemented them exclusively with district-created materials to create an entire ELA curriculum, a district would need to complete a Type Two waiver. However, if a district used included the unit starters in conjunction with an adopted curricula, the district would be using the unit starters as a supplement and it would not need to complete a waiver.

4. How do I know what materials are on the official adoption list?

The official adoption list will be approved by the State Board of Education on Nov. 15. It will be shared with districts on Nov. 16 on the [TDOE textbook website](#).

5. When can I apply for a waiver?

The window to submit an application for a waiver for the 2019-20 school year is Oct. 1, 2019–Jan. 15, 2020. Districts have two months **after** the official adoption list is published to apply for a waiver for core ELA subjects. Waivers for high school electives will open in the spring of 2020.

6. Who can submit a waiver application?

A district waiver application can only be submitted by the Director of Schools or a designee acting on behalf of the Director of Schools ([T.C.A. §49-6-2206](#); [T.C.A. §49-6-2207](#)).

7. What kind of waiver does my district need?

Districts will apply for one of two types of waivers, depending on what type of material they wish to use:

- **Type One Waiver:** A district wants to continue to use materials it is currently using and that represent high quality. A district can apply for an open education resource if the material is represented on the original bid list (e.g., Expeditionary Learning or Core Knowledge Language Arts).

A district will receive notice of approval or denial from their waiver application **four to six weeks** after the application submission. A district can make a local determination if they want to begin a traditional adoption process while waiting to see if their waiver is approved.

- **Type Two Waiver:** A district wants to use materials that are classified as a newer open educational resources (full curriculum) that were not reviewed during the statewide adoption process or district-created curricula that include all instructional materials necessary to replicate a formal textbook and instructional material program.

A district will be notified by the TDOE within **two weeks** of submission to schedule a third-party review. The district will be notified of their waiver application results within **four weeks** once the third-party review is completed. A district can make a local determination if they want to complete a traditional adoption process while waiting to see if their waiver is approved.

8. What if I need to apply for multiple waivers?

At the end of the waiver application, there is an option to add another request. Districts may apply for multiple waivers by selecting "Yes." This feature enables all waiver requests from a single district to be submitted in one form. Please do **not** submit multiple applications.

9. Has there been a change in the laws governing districts' responsibilities regarding adoption of materials?

The laws have not changed governing district's responsibilities regarding the adoption of materials. A complete set of laws governing districts' responsibilities regarding materials can be found [here](#).

10. What resources should I use when creating my rationale definition of “high quality”?

A district can use resources such as the full ELA Adoption rubrics used during the state-review, the streamlined rubrics ([both sets of rubrics are available on this page](#)), [EdReports.org](#), or the [Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool \(IMET\)](#). Districts can use any additional district, state, or national resources that would be helpful in justifying the quality of their materials in their rationale.

11. What are the timelines involved in ELA adoption and in waiver applications?

The traditional 2020 ELA local adoption process will begin with the release of the state adopted ELA list on Nov. 16, 2019. Districts will have until May 15, 2020 to submit their certificate of compliance (including both the ED 5099 and ED 2153 submission requirements), which will be posted on the [Forms & Timelines for Textbook Adoption Coordinators page](#) in the coming months.

The 2020 ELA waiver application process began Oct. 1, 2019 at 8 a.m. CT and will close Jan. 15, 2020 at 5 p.m. CT. Districts can access [the application here](#).

12. Does the waiver form have to be completed all at once or can it be saved?

The application itself cannot be saved once you begin. We recommend that you download the [PDF of the waiver application](#) and save all of the components in a document. Then, open the online form and transfer your answers so that it can be submitted all at once.