

***Interim Charge 2:*** Determine if any barriers exist in providing a digital learning environment for all children, including an evaluation of the competitive marketplace for blended learning products and services. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA) in providing districts the resources necessary to equip students with instructional materials and technology, including in the review all programs and initiatives funded by set asides from the TIMA.

McGraw Hill is pleased to respond to the Texas House of Representative Public Education Committee's **Interim Charge 2**. We believe in a strong, forward-thinking approach toward digital learning environments for all children. Our deep and historic experience working with Texas school districts has fostered a strong relationship. For example, we have developed products that are 100% TEKS-aligned, along with professional learning for teachers and administrators. Every day, McGraw Hill empowers Texas school districts to address their unique teaching and learning needs with outstanding curriculums and powerful digital and print resources. Since the education and instructional publishing landscape is changing rapidly, we are using our products and unique point of view to illustrate the ideas in this document.

## **Barriers to digital learning environments.**

Barriers to learning exist in every environment, and digital learning is perhaps even more susceptible to barriers due to the minimum technology requirements. When considering barriers to digital learning, McGraw Hill focuses on the entire teaching and learning process, from curriculum selection to classroom implementation to individual student performance improvement and learning growth.

- **Defining digital learning environments.** Based on years of experience providing state-of-the-art online and print instructional materials, McGraw Hill defines digital learning environments as a collection of dynamic and flexible digital learning tools to encourage the thoughtful use of print and digital assets that enhance and extend learning for each student.

Barriers to digital learning environments exist when students, families, and teachers do not have adequate access to rich learning experiences, through limitations of devices or connectivity. McGraw Hill has found that rural areas and densely populated urban areas in Texas often struggle to obtain sufficient resources with state-led initiatives. The need for significant access, connectivity, and student resources continue to grow at a pace that outstrips available funding.

Centralized funding approaches are particularly effective when students have homogenous needs, and the students and teachers exist in a stable economic framework (Broer M., Bai Y., & Fonseca F., 2019.). For more rural and urban areas, the variance from district to district can create both inequalities and resource insufficiency in the classroom. While per-student funding may be equivalent, the realities in the classroom and home environment can be vastly different. The breadth of the McGraw Hill curriculum reflects these variances in student, family, community, and district education needs.



- **Synchronous instruction.** For live instruction conducted in an online virtual classroom environment, McGraw Hill's products provide the content to fuel engaging, student-centered learning. Our curriculum materials encourage student-teacher communication with discussion prompts, differentiated learning resources, social-emotional learning resources, shared activities to support equity and bias-free instruction, and multi-language support tools and texts. By focusing on the whole learner and his or her needs, teachers can provide engaging, enriching synchronous instruction with McGraw Hill curriculum.

In planning for synchronous instruction, McGraw Hill curriculum includes in-depth planning resources that support teacher-led instruction. Whether it's through customizable presentations, online "shared" visual activities and labs, differentiated grouping to meet student learning needs, or powerful formative and summative assessment, McGraw Hill curriculum is designed to be a foundational component of synchronous instruction.

For synchronous instruction, barriers exist when students or teachers cannot connect effectively, either through technology tools or in the sense that the instructional routines are ineffective. Teacher training can impact the synchronous teacher-student connection, which is why McGraw Hill has delivered professional learning and a wide variety of in-person, online tools, and resources for the entire teaching and learning process.

- **Asynchronous instruction.** For "anytime" instruction, McGraw Hill products provide a wide range of instructional experiences for students. At the most basic level, students and teachers can experience new learning routines in robust learning contexts, through audiovisual experiences, online labs and manipulatives, group activities and shared projects, and structured learning processes. Some of the more powerful aspects of asynchronous learning, like self-paced learning and independent practice, are emphasized through McGraw Hill curriculum.

For example, in online science and math courses there are online labs, students build new connections to meaning in English/Language Arts through text, music, and exploration, and social studies topics include recordings of historical figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Diego Rivera. Powerful asynchronous learning supports class discussions and gives students an opportunity to share ideas and build new conversations in a scaffolded learning experience (Lasater & Vafa, 2018).

- **Blended instruction.** In many classrooms, teachers and students use both synchronous and asynchronous resources to complete the instructional day. Teacher planning tools embedded in McGraw Hill curriculums provide robust tools for assigning asynchronous experiences and planning synchronous classroom discussions (online or in person), reaching students at every point in the teaching and learning process.

To support blended instruction, McGraw Hill has also provided several districts with instructional collections. This option allows districts to import digital resources into a learning management system (LMS) to maintain continuity with existing teaching and learning processes. Since our products include both synchronous and asynchronous resources, teachers have a great deal of flexibility in their classrooms. Whether using the McGraw Hill learning portal or a custom LMS, our products are designed to enhance the learning experience from the first login to the system.

- **Industry perspective.** Within the publishing industry, many companies are struggling to provide a balanced live-to-digital instructional flow. Many learning products emphasize virtual classroom tools, while other products are collections of resources are presented in online-only formats. Only a small percentage of educational publishers can provide the full range of instructional options that teachers and schools are adopting.

For many years, McGraw Hill's curriculum has been provided both in print and digitally to capture the best of both teacher-delivered content and rich, engaging resources. As technology connectivity has expanded, we have developed several best-of-class digital-first curriculums that surpassed industry and state standards requirements. Our future focus includes developing and curating richer instructional tools, as well as designing industry-leading content resources for teachers and students.

Another critical success factor for any educational programs is alignment with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The state has invested significant funds and years of development and training to ensure implementation of the TEKS standards. As districts struggle to make difficult financial decisions in a changing fiscal environment, many districts are choosing cheaper, non-TEKS-aligned, and less effective curriculums.

**A more comprehensive and successful curriculum should be 100% TEKS-aligned, and that is an investment McGraw Hill made in Texas education.** Our programs reflect the powerful learning structures required by the TEKS. More "boutique" publishers struggle to meet even a fraction of the standards, and district students and teachers do not have the resources they need to effectively support teaching and learning. The gap in standards alignment is echoed in student performance, especially for students who need differentiated instruction to be successful and meet instructional performance standards.

### **Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA).**

The TIMA approach for funds allotment and distribution is a broad approach that Texas has adopted for district funding. As an extension of the State Board of Education's constitutional duty to provide for "free textbooks," TIMA funding supports TEKS-aligned curriculum. Textbooks, physical instructional products, and digital products are accessible through TIMA funding.

- **Strategic per-student focus.** As a standard approach for allocating student funds, a per-pupil approach may be an effective use of TIMA funds. However, specific districts may have instructional objectives that could be met by an adjusted per-pupil distribution. For example, in more rural or urban districts, teachers and students may need remedial support resources. In every subject area, and in every grade level, remediation and student support cut into the funds that are available for regular education. The one-size-fits-all approach to per-pupil funding does not typically serve all students, and may need to be evaluated in more rural or urban districts.



Additionally, a strategic funds distribution approach can be designed to emphasize TEKS-aligned curriculum. This reinforces the state's investment in a standard, effective framework for instructional success. McGraw Hill's curriculum supports both print and digital implementation, and each subject area is enriched with resources for student engagement and accomplishment.

- **Teacher training.** Included in TIMA funding, teacher professional learning is an essential success factor for implementing a curriculum with fidelity and rigor. Students benefit from highly-prepared teachers, the curriculum resources are used more effectively in every classroom, and the TEKS standards are covered in their entirety. Professional learning is a key success factor for all McGraw Hill core curriculum programs. Our expertise in supporting teacher growth and student success reflects our continued emphasis on teacher training. When teachers fully understand how to use the curriculum materials, students are exposed more effectively to the resources.

**McGraw Hill's commitment to professional learning is so important to us that we offer free Professional Learning for our Texas-created resources for the life of our curriculum adoptions.**

In a digital or blended classroom, teacher training is critical. The last few months have illustrated the need for ongoing comprehensive teacher development for both curriculum and emerging classroom technologies. McGraw Hill embeds professional learning within our curriculums, but instructor-led training provides an effective bridge between instructional goals and teacher delivery of the curriculum.

- **Effectiveness.** As districts move to more blended and digital curriculums, the impact of TIMA funds can be felt in every grade level, in every subject. Providing a streamlined requisition process can support district selection and implementation. McGraw Hill has supported a variety of purchasing processes to accommodate both state and district strategies.
- **Program review.** As an instructional materials purchasing funding approach, TIMA satisfies the purpose to distribute funds. By including teacher training purchases, physical and digital products, and district-selected programs, TIMA appears to accommodate most district technology needs. McGraw Hill supports Texas districts as they consider the most appropriate uses of funding.

In summary, McGraw Hill recognizes that Texas is striving for educational excellence through a number of funding approaches and programs. The education landscape is changing, but the need for strong instruction is not. Teachers and students are experiencing more digital instruction, and McGraw Hill has carefully designed an architecture, a strategy, and a support structure to enable Texas to meet its goals. By implementing TEKS-aligned content, Texas will support strong teaching and learning for every student, in every classroom.



Funding for professional learning and local funding adjustments for remedial instruction support may be opportunities for the Texas Legislature to continue school district support. The diversity in Texas districts may require additional funding approaches that go beyond per-pupil allocations. From the McGraw Hill experience, teachers and students in the most rural and urban districts need strong funding commitments to ensure students excel.

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