



Publishers Resource Group, Inc.
Resource is our middle name.



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Spring/Summer 2003

A Message from the President

SMART™ to Fill a Resounding Industry Need

♦ By Aileen H. Krassner

President, Publishers Resource Group, Inc.

Efficiency and quality are buzzwords we keep hearing over and over at educational conferences this spring. Publishers and educational technology developers have been wrestling with maximizing productivity and sales while providing instructional tools of the highest quality. More than ever before, educational programs must meet precise curriculum frameworks, be research-based, and contain outstanding content and diagnostic assessments. Add to this equation the fact that state and local budgets are tight and the competition for the best materials is fierce. The result is a tall order to fill: developing fully featured educational programs on a smaller budget.

Alignment Expertise

We at Publishers Resource Group, Inc., know very well the challenge our customers face. Keeping up with 50 states with 50 different (and ever-changing!) standards and assessment benchmarks is a time-consuming endeavor. The time spent building alignment into any publishing plan becomes an

investment that reaps many rewards later on. The advantages, for example, can extend to uncovering niche market opportunities, customizing for multiple markets simultaneously, and ensuring that your sales staff are fully prepared for educator reviews.

Indeed, correlations and alignments are the cornerstone of our business, and our expertise in the area launched our company's expansion into the curriculum development business not long after our start. Today, we have a dedicated Alignment Department that prepares alignments to a host of curriculum frameworks and standardized examinations. Our experience in this area and our recognition of a growing industry need to collect and organize standards has led to the creation of a new product designed exclusively for publishers.

SMART™ System Available Now

Aptly named SMART™, the Standards Mapping and Assessment Resource Tool, this series of interactive databases responds to publishers' needs to consider standards from multiple states efficiently and simultaneously. SMART™ represents a powerful productivity tool for research, planning, and the

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- *PRG Announces New Website*

Update . . . PRG's newly redesigned website (www.PRGaustin.com) officially launched earlier this spring. The new site offers more information about our curriculum development services and experience, including even more great resources. See the back page for more details.

A Message from the President

Commitment to Quality, continued

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development of standards-based curricula, assessments, and correlations.

We have been visiting with clients and friends this spring and have been encouraged by the enthusiastic response to the SMART™ system. Most have told us that they have been searching for a solution, but to no avail. We are proud to report that a solution is here now (read more on page 4)!

In This Issue

This latest issue features plenty of solutions and advice for your next development project.

- Guest author David Anderson discusses how publishers can be successful in Texas.
- Vice President Ron Reed describes the new SMART™ system now available.
- Vice President Cynthia Potter relays helpful tips to work efficiently with developers.

- And the back page features our new website debut.

PRG Can Help

Publishers Resource Group, Inc., the Accountability Company, excels at guiding our clients, many of whom are educational publishers and software and technology developers, through the process of planning, building, and marketing quality educational programs. From textbooks to websites, our experienced team specializes in developing curricula, assessments, and correlations across the core subject areas.

Please give us a call if you'd like more information or if we can assist you with your instructional development needs. Until next time, take care. ♦

Aileen H. Krassner

Successful Partnerships

Words to the Wise on Education in Texas

◆ David D. Anderson

HillCo Partners

We caught up with David Anderson recently to get his unique perspective about the education market in Texas, including the ongoing legislative session. He was kind enough to share with us his advice about the state of education in Texas, how to enter or expand your reach in the Texas market, and what instructional tools have made the biggest impact in the state thus far.

What is the top legislative issue in Texas of which publishers should be aware? Definitely,

funding is the top issue. Specifically, I would list:

- textbook funding, as this will determine the immediate financial circumstances in which the basal publishers find themselves;
- the general school finance situation, because how the schools are funded will affect how publishers interact with school leaders beyond the state adoption framework; and
- the status of the statewide curriculum initiatives, such as the reading initiative and the mathematics initiative, as these projects have directed financial

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Education in Texas, continued

resources toward professional development, materials, and district and campus infrastructure over the past eight years.

How do you expect education agencies will respond to funding shortages at the same time new accountability rules are being rolled out? If the financial crunch continues to exist when the session is over, the schools, the regional service centers, and the agency will have a more difficult time stepping into the requirements of Phase II of the Texas Accountability System. We do know this: Higher expectations for both student performance and school standards require more focused actions by educators than before. This fact usually implies not only more resources but also more efficient and effective use of existing resources.

What advice would you give to a publisher who is seeking to break into or expand into the Texas market? Look before you leap by creating a sound business plan that identifies the opportunities as well as the resources needed to be successful. Business expansion in educational publishing in Texas should be based on the entire range of possibilities, not just the state adoption opportunities. A publisher with limited or no Texas experience must consider the costs and the personnel demands of the entire adoption process—the local selection phase as well as the state listing phase. A company that considers one without considering the other is setting itself up for disaster. If the company does not have someone with Texas experience on staff, it should hire that expertise before making any commitment to competing in the adoption process.

In your opinion, what activities have been most effective in raising student achievement? The recent success of the third graders on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in reading indicates that student success is dependent on a variety of factors: professional development, diagnostic tools, and outstanding curriculum. For example, in reading, Texas has improved teachers' effectiveness by training them in research-based reading

strategies. Additionally, teachers have access to reliable, valid diagnostic tools such as the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI). Finally, the actual teaching tools—whether basal programs approved by the state's adoption process, materials purchased with reading grant funds, or those identified and purchased with local funds dedicated for reading—in the classroom are superior.

What is your outlook on the future of education in Texas? I am most optimistic about what lies ahead in education! We're seeing the results of the standards-based reforms of the past decade in Texas right now as our public schools graduate more students than ever before. Not only are more students finishing high school, but also evidence indicates that the students are better prepared for life beyond high school than any group of students in Texas history.

The move to an evidence-based approach for instructional practices bodes well for continued gains in student achievement and in overall school performance. Our school leaders are better prepared than ever before to take a sophisticated look at instructional materials, strategies, and support to assure that more students reach their potential. ♦

David D. Anderson joined HillCo Partners earlier this spring after spending the last five years as the director of curriculum and professional development with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). He currently focuses much of his time and energy on the Texas Legislature and the legislative initiatives that address public education for clients ranging from school districts and coalitions to private companies with educational products and services. Prior to joining the TEA, he held positions with Holt, Rinehart & Winston and D.C. Heath. Contact Mr. Anderson at danderson@hillcopartners.com.



PRG Offers SMART™ to Streamline Publishing Efforts

SMART™ Represents a User-Friendly, Powerful Productivity Tool

◆ By Ron Reed

Vice President, Business Development

Responding to publishers' needs to keep up with academic standards, **Publishers Resource Group, Inc. (PRG)**, has created the new SMART™ system, Standards Mapping and Assessment Resource Tool. SMART™ is a series of continuously updated interactive databases that relate the universe of state standards to one another so that similarities and differences can easily be identified. It represents a powerful productivity tool for research, planning, and the development of standards-based curricula.

Exclusively designed for publishers, SMART™ provides access to standards by subject area, state, and grade level and boils down the universe of standards to a single core topic list. Editors and marketing product managers alike will be able to immediately tap into the most current academic standards for each grade level and subject area to expedite a variety of development and marketing tasks.

PRG conceptualized and developed SMART™ in response to the challenges our staff and our clients experience every day. Given the intense focus on alignment to state standards and high-stakes assessments, shrinking state education budgets, and ever-challenging schedules, SMART™ is poised to provide significant time and cost savings to publishers. Over the past year, we have piloted the system internally and with a select few clients to fine-tune SMART™'s content, interface, and applications. The following are some usage scenarios that illustrate the power of this new product.

Research

At the basic level, SMART™ simplifies and shortens the time required for publishers to keep up-to-date on standards and assessment information from multiple states and in multiple subject areas and grade levels. Users can immediately locate and view the most current standards, identify which standards are assessed and how each standard relates to other



states, and access links to state curriculum and assessment web sites.

Scope & Sequence Development

SMART™ can be used to select targeted states, subject area(s), and grade level(s), and to instantly create a scope and sequence that includes the topics represented in the states' standards. Users can further refine the scope and sequence by omitting topics that are only represented in a few states—focusing only on the most commonly addressed topics. Users can also create reports within a given subject area that focus only on a particular strand. For example, if a client plans to develop a writing process manual, the reading/language arts database can be manipulated to show only writing topics, omitting other strands such as reading comprehension, spelling, and grammar.

Gap Analysis

SMART™ can also be used to quickly and easily determine potential gaps in new and developing products. By contracting with PRG to perform a detailed correlation of an existing product to the appropriate SMART™ topic list(s), clients can predict content and skill gaps related to key state standards. This process also helps clients establish accurate budget and schedule parameters before sending a request for bid to potential developers, minimizing additional charges and schedule delays during product development.

Multi-State Customization

Perhaps one of the most attractive and powerful uses for SMART™ is in planning and implementing multi-state customizations. Using the database to

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Streamline Publishing Efforts, continued

analyze state standard commonalities enables users to plan for the simultaneous development of content that can be repurposed across states. With immediate access to the full text of all state standards, users can easily determine which states will require more sincere customization as opposed to simple repurposing. Users can also provide their development team with a detailed map of content to be developed and/or repurposed. For customized assessment development, SMART™ can help users determine which of the states' standards are actually tested to weigh the cost/benefit of addressing only assessed standards in customized product.

Correlations

SMART™ can also have significant impact on the cost and time associated with developing correlations. Because state standards vary widely in specificity, PRG does not recommend using SMART™ to perform a single correlation to the topic list and using it to produce reports that will be scrutinized by customers (e.g., adoption forms). However, preparing a "starting point" correlation using the system can certainly simplify the task of identifying the best correlation matches related to specific standards, thus reducing overall cost and time. In addition, for ancillary and "lower-stakes" products, PRG can correlate content to the core topic list, which will then project correlations out to every state in the database, essentially performing many correlations for the price of one.

Release and Update Schedule

Available now, SMART™ initially contains pre-K through 12 standards for the math and reading/language arts subject areas. Social studies and science will follow, as will the addition of national standards. Our experienced staff of educators bring solid expertise in the core academic areas to accurately and quickly maintain the SMART™ system. Keeping up with standards for all 50 states and national standards is a challenge, and SMART™ will be updated continuously to respond to that need.

Key Features of SMART™

SMART™ was created by publishers for publishers, resulting in a powerful product that truly meets your needs. Some of SMART™'s distinguishing features include:

- The ability to compare standards across multiple states.
- Clear indication of which topics are most commonly addressed in state standards.
- The ability to jump from one state's standard to related standards from other states.
- Immediate access to the full text, including headers, of all state standards.
- Clear designation of standards that are assessed, when the state provides this information to the public.
- The ability to export standards to a text file with a simple mouse-click.

PRG Can Help

Publishers Resource Group, Inc., offers access to SMART™ on a licensing basis and offers a significant discount for work-for-hire projects when the use of SMART™ will streamline work. The addition of SMART™ to PRG's suite of accountability services specializing in alignment, assessment, and full-service curriculum development represents a complete solution for quality, carefully-aligned instructional tools. We will soon be providing trial access for potential clients to review and discover firsthand how SMART™ might help them. For information or to schedule your test drive, contact Vice President of Business Development Ron Reed at 512/328-7007 x161 or RReed@PRGaustin.com. ♦

Responsible for strategic business development initiatives, Ron Reed supports PRG's growth initiatives, such as SMART™, in co-development partnerships and joint ventures. His rapport with state departments of education, educational publishing executives, and key school district leaders throughout the nation permit him to lend valuable insight to creating win-win opportunities. Mr. Reed specializes in working with publishers to craft solutions that expedite planning, development, and sales of instructional materials. He believes that SMART™ will empower publishers to take their development efforts to the next level.



What You Need to Know About Partnering With a Developer

Before Outsourcing, Make Sure Your Needs Are Clear

◆ By Cynthia Potter

Vice President, Alignment, Assessment & Curriculum

Curriculum developers, such as Publishers Resource Group, Inc. (PRG), fill an important niche within the educational publishing community. Effectively operating as specialized publishing units, developers' core staff is composed of experienced educators who have both classroom and educational publishing experience. Curriculum developers are also excellent at leveraging vast networks of contractors with specialized expertise as schedules and projects require. Developers, and PRG in particular, are well positioned to create quality, aligned educational programs and assessments that fit each client's publishing plan, schedule, and budget. Building a relationship with a trustworthy partner has certain benefits that can actually make your work easier in the long run.

Because each project is unique, developers create customized proposals that describe the scope of the project, project guidelines, and line items that break out each service. We have found it very important to invest the time and energy necessary to work with clients to best understand what needs exist and how we can best provide assistance. The time spent planning will ensure that the project plan is thorough.

Envision the Final Product

To begin this conversation, tell your developer upfront what your goals are for your educational program and how you expect the final product to look. At the most basic level, specify which subject areas will be covered at which grade levels. A high school mathematics program is going to require very different expertise from an elementary reading program, for example. Will the instructional tool be created for teachers, students, or parents, or some combination? Knowing the audience to whom your program will cater will likely suggest a particular reading level, writing approach, and design style.

Next, decide how your instructional tool will be delivered. The instructional tool may be published as a

traditional printed piece, such as black-and-white workbooks, transparencies, and full-color textbooks and nonfiction tradebooks. By extension, it could take the form of delivering diagnostic practice test items, audio summaries, interactive lessons for students, and online lesson plans for teachers. Determining the format upfront will make it easier to gather the specifications to write and produce your program.

Prior research has likely determined which markets your program will reach. Do you plan to sell to parents who might be interested in materials to prepare their children for college entrance exams? Or will you reach school librarians and teachers with new translations of nonfiction tradebooks to enhance reading programs? Targeting specific markets may suggest that you customize some of your programs or components to compete in those markets. Certainly, you may need to consider how your program's instructional content aligns with standards and examinations.

Deciding on Services

Once you have a good idea about what you need to accomplish with your instructional product, the next step is to choose a combination of services that will make your publishing plan a reality. These plans can necessitate a complex workflow with multiple review and quality control passes at the editorial and design/production phases. If you are not familiar with these tasks, ask your developer to explain the workflow process. Use this information to specify which tasks your staff will oversee and which tasks the developer will handle. PRG's staff provide workflow charts for most proposals and have also developed a scope-of-work checklist to guide discussions in this area.

Specify whether the instructional program to be developed will be brand-new or a revision; this will help gauge how much new material will need to be written and what can be repurposed. The same goes for artwork and assessment items. The more infor-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 . . .

Partnering, continued

mation you can provide—such as page counts denoting levels of revision, new content, test items and their formats, and complexity of artwork—the better a developer can understand what you need. Will you need someone to facilitate the permissions for the art or the reading passages? Does any of your content need to be translated?

If you do not have them already, a developer can suggest style and writer's guidelines. Because many programs require precise alignment to curriculum standards and exams, PRG is careful to include that information directly into the writer's guidelines so that proper alignment is built-in from the beginning. After the writing is complete, design prototypes will be assembled to make sure the design of the program fits your needs exactly. Clients should review all guidelines and prototypes very closely to assure they are perfect, since it is time-consuming and costly to change them after the project is underway.

Schedule

Negotiating a schedule for the project is critical. Many times publishers outsource to developers because they have a rapidly approaching deadline and already have a specific due date in mind. Other times, clients may have a more flexible due date because they have planned ahead. In either case, always be sure to figure into the schedule the review time your staff will need before deciding on a due date. How fast can your staff turn work around if your schedule is aggressive?

If you require a compressed schedule, developers can work with you to meet challenging deadlines. For instance, PRG can expedite reviews by sending electronic proofs. For any schedule to be successful, *both* the client and the developer must adhere to the agreed-upon schedule.

Budget

If specific budget parameters are available, by all means share them with your developer. Using this information, a developer will be able to offer several options to meet your publishing needs while ensuring quality throughout.

A project's schedule and amount of revisions highly affect how much it will cost to produce your program. Changing project guidelines and/or adding to the scope of the project midstream also can become expensive. That is why investing time upfront on planning is so important.

On the other hand, pay attention to how you can leverage economies of scale by giving a developer larger chunks of projects. Developers can often pass on quantity discounts directly to you, which can result in significant savings.

PRG Can Help

Since 1989, **Publishers Resource Group, Inc.**, has provided alignment, assessment, and curriculum development expertise to educational publishers, test publishers, and education technology companies. Our clients depend on our experience analyzing educational programs' alignment to a host of academic standards. With

Need a Resource?

Because developers work on many kinds of projects customized for many different markets, they are uniquely poised to share their expertise in many different ways. The key is to ask for what you need. They can help

- assist with creating a publishing plan,
- create ancillary components to enhance your program,
- incorporate educational technology in meaningful ways,
- provide full-service editorial development aligned to state standards,
- prepare test items to meet state testing objectives and formats,
- develop packaging that fits your program's current look and feel,
- procure and permission art from national agents and art houses, and
- coordinate correlations to show alignment to standards.

SMART™, we offer a complete curriculum development solution that publishers can trust. For more information or a free consultation, contact Vice President Cynthia Potter at 512/328-7007 x164 or CPotter@PRGaustin.com. ♦

Cynthia Potter specializes in creating appropriate alignment and curriculum development plans for instructional programs in all subject areas. Her authority encompasses all matters pertaining to budget, schedule, and technical performance for the development of each project. She believes in meticulous publishing plans to anticipate snags and to make a project run smoothly all the way to the end.



PRG Announces New Website

Publishers Resource Group, Inc., is delighted to announce the launch of our newly redesigned website (www.PRGAustin.com). PRG's new website now offers more information and helpful resources.

Highlights

- More descriptions of services—curriculum development, assessment, correlations, and beyond—are now available!
- Find out more about our experience including a sampling of projects and our client list.
- A new and improved interface on our Educational Conference Calendar and State Adoption Schedules will help you find what you need.
- Read/print the latest issue of our FYI newsletter. Update and change your free subscription!
- Need some expert advice? Read/print short Solution Series articles to give you insight on a variety of topics.
- Visit with us at upcoming conferences. See PRG's complete schedule under Contact Us.

Your Feedback Welcomed

We encourage you to visit our new site and tell us what you think. Please send any comments or feedback to Amy Carr at ACarr@PRGAustin.com.

It is our hope that this new redesign will better explain and demonstrate our company's expertise. The next time you are looking for advice or need a trustworthy outsourced solution, we hope you will think of Publishers Resource Group, Inc. ♦



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