



# Shelby County Schools, 23<sup>rd</sup> Largest District in US, Increases Equity & Access for ELA Students

## Executive Summary

Shelby County Schools needed rigorous, standards-based supplemental material for high school ELA classes. Their commitment to selecting high-quality instructional materials that meet the needs of their diverse population while ensuring rigor is what made them choose XanEdu and a customized curriculum solution (ELA Guidebooks).

## Shelby County Schools

Shelby County Schools (SCS) is the largest district in Tennessee and one of the 25 largest districts in the United States, serving more than 108,000 students. With a population that includes 71,000 economically disadvantaged students, 5,600 English Language Learners, and 13,000 students with disabilities, Shelby County School leadership seeks to ensure all students have equitable access to high-quality, rigorous learning materials.

According to district leadership, XanEdu's "flexibility, responsiveness, and can-do attitude" allowed Shelby County to find the partner they were seeking.

### About XanEdu

XanEdu's K12 CustomBook Solutions makes education personalized and affordable by giving districts and states control to create materials around their courses and students, rather than asking students to adapt to a standard, off-the-shelf resource. Working with more than 1,200 education institutions nationally, XanEdu helps learners at all levels of education access high-quality, student-centered, innovative learning resources.





# Challenges and Solutions

## Challenge 1: Improve Outcomes Mid-Textbook Adoption Cycle

Shelby County was in their fifth year of a seven-year adoption cycle and understood all too well the challenges of long-term adoptions. A primary concern is the static nature of content adopted half a decade prior. Over time, many portions of the materials become less relevant, and likely less effective, to teachers and students. Shelby County recognized that the curriculum was not meeting their standards of rigor and quality.

During the curriculum review process, Shelby County Schools' Department of Curriculum and Instruction began a quest to align the learning in high school English classrooms to the demands of shifting literacy instruction.

While SCS could not adopt a new textbook until the next state adoption cycle in several years, **their challenge was to find immediate solutions to fill gaps of relevant and rigorous content.**

## Solution: Customize to Unique Needs & Save

SCS sought to identify and deliver critical content solutions that would fill curriculum gaps. After a careful review and evaluation process, SCS chose the highly rated ELA Guidebooks—but they wanted to tailor Guidebooks to Shelby County Schools' specific goals.

SCS recognized in Guidebooks' open licensing model and in XanEdu's customization capabilities, that they could tailor Guidebooks units of instruction to their specific goals and strengthen the rigor of their existing curriculum and textbook.

By partnering with XanEdu, Shelby County leveraged XanEdu's customization expertise and production flexibility to deliver over 28,000 printed books that **improved equity and access, streamlined implementation, and added value for teachers, parents and students.**

*The Center for American Progress cites Shelby County Schools as a standout for selecting high-quality instructional materials.*

*"SCS had a curriculum team of two advisors...we simply did not have the resources to create the materials by ourselves. Using Guidebooks cut the learning curve for our district so that we could provide quality materials immediately instead of having to wait until our next textbook adoption."*

XanEdu has the unique ability to customize at any scale. Rather than create one-size-fits-all resources, like traditional textbooks, XanEdu customizes unique solutions for districts of any size. Shelby County educators were able to tailor an entire curriculum to supplement their existing curriculum. By selecting the most impactful portions of the content, **Shelby County saved significantly** by paying for only what they planned to use.

## Challenge 2: District-Wide Copyrights & Open Licensing

The ELA Guidebooks curriculum offers an open license model, meaning all of the content that was authored by the creators can be used by others without restrictions. But, not all of the Guidebooks content was authored by the creators. The creators also included third-party content such as poems and text excerpts to create a highly rigorous curriculum. This third-party content is copyrighted and cannot be distributed under the same open licenses as the rest of the curriculum.

### This created two implementation questions:

- If a district tells schools to seek out the curriculum on their own, would the school administration understand the nuances of the range of licenses? Would they end up simply photocopying the 3rd party content illegally?
- If a third-party did understand the licensing requirements, would they have the resources to manage all of those copyright permissions?

**As a district seeking to implement an open curriculum, how do you overcome these implementation barriers? The creators of the Guidebooks curriculum understood these challenges and had a plan to support districts like Shelby County.**

## Solution: Partner with Copyright Expert

The original creators of ELA Guidebooks put out a nationwide request for proposals (RFP) and after extensive review, selected XanEdu to be the exclusive partner for any school district, such as SCS, seeking to implement ELA Guidebooks Readers.

In partnership, XanEdu works with district representatives to assess their unique requirements, provide crucial copyright management services, and in the process, **remove critical barriers to implement** tailored content for each district.

Because XanEdu's permissions experience extends over 20 years, instead of worrying about copyrights, Shelby County was able to focus on the curriculum and how they could tailor it to their needs. Shelby County customized unique Readers tailored specifically to their students and teachers.

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## Challenge 3: Ensure Equity & Access

Like many districts, Shelby County has delivered curriculum resources to teachers through online tools.

Because of their experience distributing resources in this manner, SCS considered two key challenges when deciding how to successfully implement their new custom solution:

- Avoid inconsistent teacher access, and therefore student inequity, often found when teachers are required to seek out (and print/copy) resources from online/CMS tools.
- Get buy-in on the quality of the resources from their community and ensure parent satisfaction

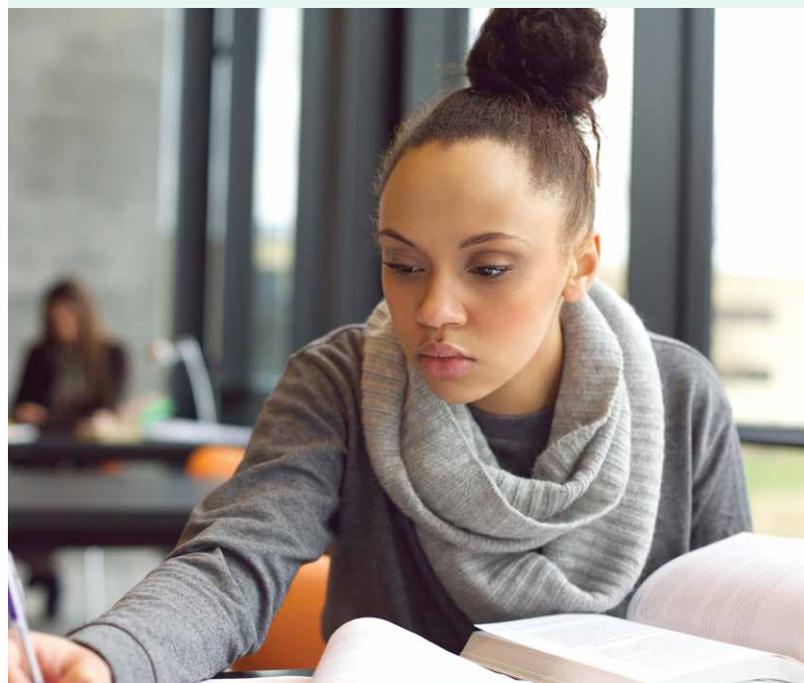
## Solution: Produce a High-Quality, Easily Accessible CustomBook

To SCS district leaders' pleasant surprise, XanEdu has the book design and printing scalability to service any size partnership. This gave Shelby County's curriculum team even more flexibility to meet the needs of their students, teachers and parents.

In collaboration with XanEdu, the district configured the content and determined the most equitable solution would be to print the Guidebooks Readers in full year sets for all of their students.

Providing content from any rights holder is at the core of the CustomBook Solution. This is the essence of what gives educators more control than a traditional textbook solution. XanEdu takes an extremely complex permission process and turns it into a simple ordering process for districts.

According to Rebecca Kockler, Assistant Superintendent of Academic Content at the Louisiana Department of Education, "The Louisiana Department of Education designed Guidebooks to be practical and teacher-friendly. Our partnership with XanEdu allows us to make good on that commitment."



After receiving positive feedback from teachers during the pilot year, the district built a scope and sequence to implement Guidebooks in all of their English classrooms at the high school level.

- **Book Format** – a high-quality book format provides a tangible asset teachers and parents can easily access
- **Unique Configuration** – SCS organized the units to support their curriculum.
- **Custom Production** – SCS selected options to give teachers autonomy in the classroom.
- **Teacher Tools** – XanEdu produced teacher editions to aid in teacher planning.

Shelby County was able to build out a powerful solution for their students and their teachers.

“Not only is the custom organization of the units more impactful for student achievement, but the strategies used to unpack a text or create a piece of writing have helped our teachers improve their practice.”

“Teachers really like the printed materials. As an added bonus, providing resources in print helped to significantly cut down teachers’ time at the copy machine, allowing them to spend more time focused on what’s important.”

—Shelby County Curriculum and Instruction Team



## Conclusion

In XanEdu, Shelby County Schools found a partner not only to build their custom solution, but also to help take it to a higher level:

- More impactful for student achievement
- Help teachers improve their practice
- Reduce costs

“Ultimately this is about equity and growth. What we see when schools are fully implementing XanEdu’s custom Guidebooks is that students are more engaged and take more ownership of their learning, which we know are true indicators of success.”

– Raquel Darling-Greer, Literacy Advisor for High School

