Advice for selecting curriculum

A form to that could be updated and used:  
<http://www.sde.com/Downloads/TeacherResources/di_text/textbook_evaluation.pdf>

A couple suggestions from my own mistakes and   
first-hand experience of living through the mistakes of others.   
  
1)  Call your local rep and request review kits for the series you're   
going to review. From secular publishers, these are free and you or   
the teacher gets to keep the books for her own personal library. From   
Christian publishers, you'll probably have to return them after 60   
days.   
  
2)  Be sure to allow enough time. I typically plan to start in October   
for the following term, although plans and reality don't always   
coincide.   
  
3)  Be sure to include the teacher(s) who will be teaching the   
curriculum on the review team and take their input seriously. Some of   
the most attractive, apparently engaging texts, may be organized and   
sequenced in a way which is difficult to teach. A parent and/or board member on the   
team isn't a bad idea either. FMH used to have an Education Committee,   
including both a board member and parents, whose job it was to give   
final approval to the text/publisher the faculty committee   
recommended.   
  
4)  Be sure to look at the entire scope and sequence of the subject   
from your lowest to highest grade. Also, don't ignore state standards   
in the subject for each grade level.   
  
5)  When you select a series, if it is sequential, like reading or   
math, consider implementing it grade by grade. When my son was in 4th   
grade many years ago his elementary school switched the entire reading   
program throughout the school to aBeka in the same year (or else they   
used different curricula from grade to grade based on teacher   
preference--we're not sure which). My son and a few of his friends   
survived; however, overall the backlash was severe enough that they   
soon dropped the series. I'm not sure they would have had to had they   
implemented it grade by grade.   
  
6)  Don't assume that one publisher's work is superior in every   
subject. We use one publisher for math, another for history. Neither   
of them Christian publishers.   
  
7)  Beginning teachers especially, but experienced teachers as well,   
can significantly enhance their classroom presentations (as well as   
minimize preparation time) with adequate teacher resources -- answer   
keys, overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations, well   
annotated teacher's editions, editable test masters on CD, etc. Our   
MyWorld Geography text (gr. 6, Pearson, 2011) comes with an unlock key   
to access short, online, first-person bios from children living in the   
community being studied. My Algebra and Geometry series (McDougal   
Littell, 2007), comes with online PP presentations which take the   
examples from the text and solve them step-wise in the presentation.   
This series also has online homework tutors on the same website for the kids.   
  
8)  Unless your students are dramatically different from mine, today's   
kids will not focus long on resources that are too text intensive. The   
more pictures and diagrams, the better. I would automatically   
eliminate any book which wasn't published in full color.   
  
9)  MEEC (does it still exist?) used to do an annual review of a   
specific subject area, going through the basic curriculum once ever   
five or six years. They made their evaluation of each series as well   
as their final recommendations available to member schools. If that   
isn't available for you, ask around to find out what others are using and finding   
successful.

10)  The obvious missing criterion above is whether or not the series   
is compatible with our Anabaptist understanding of the Word. I didn't   
miss it; I'm assuming it's at the top of your list.   
  
-Jim Gochnauer