

DEC 13 2002

Textbook choices ready for local boards

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After almost a year of debates and studies at the state level, the textbook selection process officially will move to local school districts in January.

Members of Plano ISD's subcommittees will sort through information received from publishers, teachers, and others.

To help local officials choose from the 28 social studies textbooks approved by the state, the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think tank, is scheduled to distribute its 2,100-page review this week.

The foundation has been at the center of a years-long battle over which textbooks are used in public schools, especially in courses on history, biology and English.

The fight is renewed with every textbook-selection process.

In the spring of 2002, foundation members commissioned 16 experts to review the textbooks submitted by publishers for the State Conforming List.

To qualify for that list, texts must meet all state curriculum standards. A review panel of classroom teachers and college professors examined books within their areas of specialization, according to information from the foundation.

Reviewers examined books for the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade level. They also reviewed texts for high school courses on world history, American history since Reconstruction, economics and American government.

The report cites textbooks' strengths and

weaknesses and notes specific biases that reviewers said undermine the books' academic integrity.

For more information about the report or the review panel, visit the foundation's Web site at www.tppf.org.

The deadline for Plano district officials to

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Textbooks in these subjects were adopted by Texas Board of Education members Nov. 15. Plano ISD officials will select texts within these categories to use in the 2003 - 2004 school year. The books will be used for an estimated seven years.

Pre-Kindergarten

Elementary Social Studies Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Social Studies Grades 6, 7, 8

World Geography

World History

AP World History

US History

AP US History

Economics

AP Economics Macro

AP Economics Micro

US Government

AP US Government

AP Comparative Government and Politics

Sociology

Psychology

AP Psychology

Books

From 1A finalize their selection is Feb. 6. School district trustees are scheduled to approve the choices at the Feb. 18 board meeting.

The cost of textbooks approved by the state board is covered by Texas' Permanent School Fund. Although district officials may choose to use books not accepted by the state, they must use local funds to pay for those texts.

Although parents are not included on the selections subcommittees and don't have vot-

ing power, they do have the option to review the books and make their opinions known.

Textbooks being considered for use in the district will be available for review between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays through Jan. 15 at the school administration building, 2700 W. 15th St.

An evening review session is scheduled from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 14 in the curriculum department of the administration building. In the event the schools are closed that day due to inclement weather, the books will be available for review Jan. 20, at the same time and place.

"Parents have until Jan. 15 to

come review the books," district textbook administrator Melanie Kelley said. "The reason we cut it off for parents, is because we have to have two weeks to get all the information back to the different subcommittees."

On Jan. 31, each individual subcommittee's coordinator has to turn in the group's votes.

From there, the information goes before the district's textbook committee — a 15-member team consisting of subcommittee chairmen, the three curriculum coordinators from pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary education, Marilyn Brooks and Kelley.

Brooks, the district's executive assistant for curriculum,

serves as chairwoman for the committee.

Kelley said at that level, because of the background work subcommittee members have already done, discussion is limited.

"They've really hashed out all the details at the subcommittee level," she said. "That's where the real work is being done — that's the nitty gritty because they have notes from the teacher input from their campus, other subcommittee members and the presentations. It's not just one person doing it. It's a big thing."

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