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# Schools To Receive Textbook Summary

AUSTIN - Texas public schools are now selecting social studies textbooks, with superintendents and teachers deciding what students will learn about their state, nation and world over the coming decade. To assist schools identify factually sound, academically rich textbooks, the Texas Public Policy Foundation is this week mailing a summary of its comprehensive 2,100-page review to districts throughout Texas.

Over the next several months, schools will examine social studies textbooks to prepare for the April 1, 2003 state selection deadline. When districts select books that were approved by the State Board of Education, the cost is covered by Texas' Permanent School Fund. Districts must use local funds to purchase books that failed to be placed on the State's approved lists.

"Schools will be making difficult decisions," said Chris Patterson, director of education research for the Foundation. "Teachers will be reviewing dozens of books to decide which books do the best job covering material that students must master for new state assessments."

The Foundation's review offers schools information about academic quality, readability, teaching styles and instructional focus of textbook choices. The review was conducted by 16 teachers and professors, mostly employed in classrooms and universities throughout Texas; textbooks were evaluated by at least one teacher and professor to give both an instructional and

a subject area perspective.

"Reviewers found clear distinctions in the quality of the textbooks," noted Mrs. Patterson. "Even though the most academically sound textbooks will give students a professional advantage, few schools have resources to thoroughly review each textbook, so our review can be a valuable aid for teachers."

This year's selection of textbooks represents an important step toward ensuring that students in Texas public schools learn the state's social studies curriculum, adopted in 1997, said Mrs. Patterson. "New textbooks offer an opportunity to remedy the widespread, pervasive ignorance of history demonstrated by students throughout the nation."

But none of new social studies textbooks contain enough history, according to the Foundation's review. Textbooks are written to cover the topics that state policymakers identify must be taught and tested, and history has been short-changed, added Patterson.

The Foundation's review identifies the history missing from new textbooks and lists history education resources available on the World Wide Web.

The Foundation's review is available at <http://www.tppf.org/2002textbookreview/> and represents an investment of close to \$100,000 in the effort to improve social studies textbooks and history education in Texas and throughout the nation.