
Textbooks, Section IV (Social Studies)

The Background:

The State Textbook Commission has prepared a preliminary list of social studies textbooks. The list is ready for review by the State Board of Education.

The State Textbook Commission is legally charged with the responsibility of preparing “a list of standard editions of textbooks for approval by the State Board of Education for the use in the public schools of the state.” [TCA 49-6-2202 (a)] The law also provides that the Commission “may appoint an advisory panel of expert teachers in each subject area or grade level to advise the Commission on book selections.” [TCA 49-6-2201 (j)]

In the May 13, 2013, meeting of the Commission, a report recommending the utilization of such a panel was accepted. The review is to be conducted under the following parameters:

- That no arbitrary number of titles to be listed for a category be established.
- That each title be measured against the criteria specified for the category for which it was bid without any effort to provide an overall ranking of books in the category.
- That the present practice of listing some titles as “alternative level texts” be continued, with the Invitation to Bid to include a specific call for books for this category.
- That the listing of books be based upon quality of content and correlation to the course content approved by the State Board of Education, correlation to national standards when such standards are available, readability (as determined by the professional judgment of expert teachers) and physical characteristics, including compliance with Manufacturing Standards and Specifications for Textbooks.

The textbooks are currently being reviewed by a cadre of 27 teachers. A team assembled by the Tennessee Department of Education provided training to these teachers on the review process, state standards and current research on teaching strategies in this discipline. The training session was held in conjunction with the publishers’ hearings on Jun. 10-11, 2013. The teachers will conduct independent reviews during the month of July and come together the week of Jul. 22, 2013 to compile committee reports for the books submitted. These reports will be disseminated to the Commission members and the respective publishers, who will respond to them at the hearings on Sep. 17-18, 2013. Some Commission members will also

independently review the textbooks using volunteers in the school systems with which they are affiliated. The Commission will meet in October to formulate the recommended list.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends acceptance of the list of textbooks for Section IV Social Studies on first reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.