

MATH LOBBY SLAMS E-TEXT BOOKS, LAPTOPS

Contributed by William Lutz
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The State Board of Education got an earful from several mathematics educators at its meeting Tue. Oct. 19. Specifically, the math educators wanted the board to issue Proclamation 2005, which orders new elementary school mathematics textbooks. They also objected to a legislative proposal to replace traditional textbooks with laptops.

The board heard from several math coordinators or specialists at its meeting, including ones from the Denton, Coppell, Austin, and Houston school districts as well as a professor from Texas State University.

“It is important that the new textbooks have technology components. I do not believe it is wise to go to a technology only textbook,” said Michelle King, mathematics coordinator for the Coppell ISD. “If we get into a scenario where every child has to have access to a laptop, a desktop, or something in order to access their textbook, we are going to be putting many districts at a disadvantage. I do not believe that is what this board wants.”

The math coordinators also promised the board they would help make the case for paying for math books to the Texas legislature. In several versions on HB 2, the school finance bill, the traditional review and adoption cycle for textbooks was junked. Instead, school districts would be given a per-student allotment, with 40 percent of the allotment going to technology and the remainder can buy either books or laptops, whichever it prefers. In other words, school districts would not have to replace the math books, which are scheduled for replacement in 2007 for elementary school and 2008 for high schools.

Traditionally, the board would issue proclamations, which ask publishers to submit textbooks for state approval and purchase. The money for textbooks would come from the Permanent School Fund, an endowment managed by the board.

But Rider 78 of the Texas Education Agency appropriations bill asked the board not to issue any future proclamations. Several board members, however, are concerned that by not issuing a proclamation, lawmakers will take the proceeds of the Permanent School Fund and use it on things other than its original purpose — the purchase of textbooks.