

Texas education board reaches compromise on reading standards

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AUSTIN – State Board of Education members on Wednesday struck a compromise on proposed curriculum standards for English and reading classes, delaying adoption of the new standards for a month and appointing a subcommittee to come up with a plan acceptable to all.

Before the compromise was approved on a 12-3 vote, board members aligned with social conservatives had been expected to push for a substitute to replace a curriculum plan hammered out over the last two years by working groups of English teachers and curriculum experts from across the state.

Democrats and moderate Republicans, on the other hand, wanted to stick with the original plan devised by the working groups even though most felt the plan needed additional work.

Board member Pat Hardy, R-Weatherford, proposed the compromise that calls for a subcommittee to consider improvements to the original plan and bring its recommendations back to the board next month. The subcommittee includes two social conservatives, a moderate Republican and a Democrat.

Ms. Hardy said the delay would give all parties a chance to shape the final document while respecting the long hours of work that teachers and other educators have put in on the original curriculum standards.

The standards are supposed to lay out what students should be taught in English and reading classes in public schools. They also provide the basis for questions asked on student achievement tests – such as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills – and for material that must be included in textbooks purchased by the state.

Board Chairman Don McLeroy, R-College Station, offered the substitute plan, saying he was not satisfied with the standards developed by the educator working groups.

But teachers testifying before the board said the substitute proposal – originally drafted in 1997 – was too outdated.