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### **A fundamental purchase needed**

Under the Texas Constitution, the state has the basic duty to “provide free textbooks” for public school children. However, the draft budgets released by the Texas House and Senate include zero dollars for new reading textbooks and other existing obligations for instructional materials, including enrollment growth and annual purchases of consumable materials such as elementary math workbooks.

All instructional materials are included as a nearly \$900 million contingency in the budget, to be purchased only if the Available School Fund, the constitutionally dedicated funding source, receives \$1.4 billion in market earnings. Given the current economy, these gains are unlikely and probably not foreseeable within the current 140-day legislative session. However, there are sufficient other dollars in the fund, including some real estate proceeds and motor fuel taxes, to cover the costs.

Supplying our schoolchildren with instructional materials should not be a choice. If the Legislature fails to fund instructional materials this biennium, more than 1 million elementary students will not have math instructional materials when schools open in fall 2009. In the following year, more than 4.5 million students will not have the new reading materials needed to help them learn new state requirements.

Reading materials are a fundamental purchase. With the state’s first new reading materials in 10 years, Texas is facing its most important textbook purchase.

For only 11 cents per day, Texas can fulfill its current obligations and supply new reading instructional materials to tens of millions of Texas students and teachers over the next decade.

The new reading adoption will include the following materials essential to a student’s future success:

- New college readiness standards
- Technical tools such for professional development for teachers
- Teaching English to the state’s rapidly growing population of English Learners
- \*Electronic tutoring for struggling students

Right now the state has the chance to invest in our children’s futures by funding the most fundamental educational need: Reading.

Our public school children cannot afford to wait.

— Diane Patrick, state representative, District 94, Arlington;  
and Donna Howard, state representative, District 48, Austin