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Poll Shows Texas Voters Favor Guaranteed Funding for Textbooks
Education advocates urge the Texas Legislature not to tie funding of textbooks and other instructional materials to the fate of the stock market

AUSTIN, Texas – By overwhelming margins, Texas voters want full funding for textbooks and other instructional materials to be guaranteed in the state budget, according to a poll conducted by Baseline and Associates earlier this month.

Education advocates from across Texas joined a bi-partisan group of lawmakers in releasing the results of the statewide poll commissioned by Texas Curriculum.org, and calling on the Texas Legislature to guarantee funding for instructional materials. Currently funding for textbooks is only included as a contingent rider in the \$47 billion state education budget.

“Parents and the public strongly believe that textbooks and instructional materials need to be funded, and we hope the Legislature will take appropriate action,” said **Houston Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Abelardo Saavedra**.

By a compelling margin of 73 percent to 22 percent, poll respondents said they wanted the Texas Legislature to guarantee funding for textbooks and instructional materials in the education budget.

Under the Texas Constitution, the state must use the Available School Funds (ASF) to “provide free text books” for children. But so far in this session the Legislature is proposing funding for instructional materials only as a contingency.

Currently, all new English Language Arts and Reading instructional materials are included as a 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.

But the survey results released today show a resounding 68-percent of the poll respondents want funding for textbooks and instructional materials to be based on a guaranteed amount that is specified in the state budget, not dependent on the stock market returns through the Permanent Education Fund.

Education leaders from around the state are hoping legislators will secure the money needed to purchase the state’s first new reading and language arts books in 10 years, along with other instructional materials.

“With America in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, now is not the time for lawmakers to bet on the stock market to pay for textbooks and other instructional materials,” **San Antonio Independent School District Superintendent Robert Duron**. “The Legislature should act immediately to restore full, guaranteed funding for the purchase of textbooks and other instructional materials.”

The nearly decade-old reading and language arts textbooks in use in Texas classrooms today do not align with the new and more rigorous Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

“Students cannot be expected to continue to excel in the classroom without the proper learning tools,” said **Dr. Mark Henry, Superintendent of Galena Park Independent School District**. “Studies show that a large majority of parents, as well as the public, support guaranteed funding of textbooks and classroom materials.”

Without secured funding, educators would be forced to find other ways to equip their classrooms with the critical supplies needed to meet new state accountability standards.

“Texas voters by overwhelming margins expect the 81st Texas Legislature to fully fund new reading instructional materials and do not want them to be contingent on the stock market,” said **Brittany Fish, Executive Director of TexasCurriculum.org**

These new textbooks will be expected to serve more than 4.5 million students across Texas for at least seven years.

Other findings from the survey include:

- 70 percent agree it is appropriate for the State of Texas to use the additional federal stimulus dollars allocated for public education to guarantee the purchase of new reading textbooks and other instructional materials and 76 percent favored using federal stimulus funds to guarantee the purchase of up-to-date instructional materials, new technology for schools and repairing school buildings damaged by Hurricane Ike.
- 85 percent favor protecting textbook funding to make sure that money in the fund is used for up-to-date math and reading textbooks for students, not for other purposes.
- 68 percent said that providing instructional materials for almost 4.8 million students – to be used for ten years – at a cost of about 11 cents a day is a bargain for the state.

The poll, conducted March 1-4, 2009, interviewed 602 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percent.

The poll results are available to the public on TexasCurriculum.org.

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