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# Reform bill would delay elementary math books

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AUSTIN (AP)—Texas teachers are fuming over a provision in the Senate's education reform bill that would delay the ordering of new math textbooks for elementary school students.

The provision is tucked in a bill that would use part of the state's budget surplus to reduce school property taxes. It was one of several school reform measures a Senate committee added to the bill Friday, including a \$2,000 teacher pay raise and bonuses for teachers who raise students' scores on standardized tests.

The full Senate could begin debating the bill Tuesday, but its future is uncertain as senators argue over how much property-tax money wealthy districts should be required to share with poorer districts. The bill's sponsor, Republican Sen. Florence Shapiro of Plano, has vowed to use legislative rules to block it from being considered.

If it passes, the State Board of Education will have to stop taking bids from publishers for math textbooks that schools are scheduled to receive in 2008.

That's a huge problem for students and teachers because the books they're currently using were adopted in 1998 and don't cover all the topics included in the standardized test the state began using in 2003, said Colleen Clower, the elementary math coordinator for the Denton school district.

For example, a section on charts and graphs in the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills stumped one third-grade class in her district because it wasn't in their textbooks and their teacher wasn't expecting to see so many questions like that on the test, Clower said.

It's even more troublesome for fifth-graders, who have to pass the math section of the TAKS to be promoted to sixth grade.

"If the state has not provided materials like that to every student and teacher, then how can they legitimately test them over it, much less hold them back a grade," said Penny McAdoo, director of elementary mathematics for the Lewisville school district.

Lawmakers want to restructure the decades-old textbook adoption process, replacing it with an effort to stimulate the use of technology in Texas classrooms. But they couldn't reach an agreement last year, and they told the state board to stop the adoption process because they say they don't want publishers working on books that might not be used.

The board ignored those instructions and voted in November to begin taking bids for the new math books.

Vice Chairman Don McLeroy, a Republican dentist from Bryan, said the board didn't feel comfortable delaying the process when lawmakers had no solid alternative in place. It already takes years to approve new books and get them in classrooms.

"If we had delayed the process, that's just another year down the road and it'd be even longer before children would get new books," he said.

The bill also would prevent the board from starting the bidding process for elementary and secondary English, reading and literature textbooks. That was scheduled to happen later this year.

Clower said she hopes the provision gets cut when the full Senate debates the bill.

"We need to do things that are good for kids, and what we have right now is not the best thing for kids," she said.