

TEXTBOOK ADOPTIONS

As promised in my last article, I am devoting this article to updating you on textbook adoptions and sharing the pertinent information involved in this process. I am focusing on this topic because I believe that there are some of you who may have some misinformation on textbook adoptions as it relates to our district.

How often are new textbooks adopted? As a rule, new textbook adoptions per core subject area and other subject areas occur every five years. For financial reasons, the adoption dates are staggered so that usually no more than one core subject area comes up for adoption in any given year. Please keep in mind that adoption does not mean the same thing as purchasing. Adoption simply means that should the monies be available, the latest textbook adoption for that subject area is the one that should be purchased.

Who determines which textbook will be adopted for any given subject area? Well, let's look at one of the latest and biggest textbook adoptions that has taken place since I have been your Superintendent. I am referring, of course, to the K-6 Language Arts adoption and subsequent purchase that took place in 2002-2003. As in any textbook adoption, a committee of teachers for that specific field (in this case, language arts), along with administrators, get together and review all of the possible textbook options. In this case, parents were also included in the review and selection process. All of this is facilitated by the Curriculum Supervisor. Obviously, they look for how well the textbook addresses the Ohio Academic Content Standards for that subject. They also closely scrutinize all of

the supplemental materials that the textbook company produces to go along with the student text. After much searching, studying, and discussion, the committee votes on their recommendation to the school board. In the case of the K-6 Language Arts selection committee, the choice was the Harcourt Trophy Series. Sometimes, textbook companies throw in part of the supplemental materials if a district selects their textbook program. The other supplemental materials can be purchased by the district if funds are available, or they can be purchased by individual school PTO groups, if the need and desire exists.

I can tell you that textbooks and supplemental materials do not come cheap. The K-6 Language Arts textbooks and some supplementals cost the district in excess of a quarter of a million dollars. I can also tell you that all of the big textbook companies publish materials that are catered to the needs of two or three big states. Those states are California, Texas, and New York. Because of this, particular textbook company's materials may or may not address all of Ohio's Academic Content Standards. When they don't, then teachers have to find other ways and materials to use to teach a content standard. As much as we might like for it to be, there is no "one size fits all" in this business.

Who decides what textbooks or materials will be purchased after they have been adopted? In the last few years, the district has been able to purchase textbooks immediately after board approval. This has not always been the case, and may not be true in the near future for financial reasons. Indirectly, the State of Ohio heavily

influences these purchases due to the ever-changing content standards in the core subject areas (math, language arts, science, and citizenship) that all students are expected to master, followed by the rigorous state testing program. An example of this would be our current science textbooks/materials. Those were up for adoption this past spring. However, Ohio was in the process of adopting new academic content standards for science, so it made little sense to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on new science materials until the adoption of the new content standards was completed by ODE and the Ohio State School Board. Our Curriculum Supervisor, Mrs. Peggy Ginn, has already contacted the textbook companies to request that new science materials be sent to the buildings for review by staffs. We certainly plan to do an adoption this year, along with some purchases.

Another contributing factor to all of this process is money. Every school district prioritizes its textbook allocation according to the most glaring needs. Because the core subjects often get the most attention, other “untested” subject areas may wait for years. An example of this would be our recent adoption and purchase of new K-8 music books. The last time our district purchased new music books was way back in 1985. Money drives everything. As you well know, you do the best that you can with the resources you have available.

In closing, I could have gone on and on with this subject. However, if you have specific questions regarding any aspect of this, please feel free to contact Mrs. Ginn at 544-5586

or contact your building principal. He/she has the same information to share with you as either Mrs. Ginn or myself. Thank you.

Charles P. Kimble

Superintendent