

Health Education Textbooks in Texas: What You Might Not Know
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Abstract

Textbook content has long been a source of controversy. Whether it is science, history, or health education, what students read in school has become a lightning rod for political posturing, moral positioning, and censorship. Textbook adoption in Texas is the province of the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) and the SBOE is the only elected state board in Texas and is politically driven and extremely partisan. As the second largest purchaser of textbooks in the country, what happens in Texas often affects textbook content across the U.S.

Due to the politically charged nature of past textbook adoption hearings, in 2004 publishers self-censored themselves in the health education textbooks they prepared for the adoption process. Abstinence-until-marriage sexuality education was the presented as the only option in all the books, except one. There is no discussion of methods of contraception or disease prevention in any of the books with the exception of the mention of condoms in one textbook. It appeared to many that the publishers had not complied with Texas law that required that the TEKS be covered in the textbooks. Specifically, the TEKS 7I for health education clearly states;

"Students shall analyze the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of barrier protection and other contraceptive methods including the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), keeping in mind the effectiveness of

remaining abstinent until marriage."

This presentation examines Texas law and practices regarding textbook adoption, specific content and messages in current health education textbooks, and how citizens can become involved in the textbook adoption process.