

# Los Angeles Times

## Hubbard Texts Approved for School Use

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■ **Education:** A state panel has given a preliminary OK to five books based on the Scientology founder's teaching philosophy.

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The state education department has given preliminary approval to statewide use of school textbooks inspired by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, which already are at the center of a controversy in Los Angeles schools.

Five books based on Hubbard's education ideas are expected to be placed on a list of supplementary texts that schools across the state can purchase—possibly as soon as September, an education official said Monday.

"There's no religion mentioned in those books," said Anna Emery of the state Department of Education office, which oversees the approval of supplemental textbooks. "They don't say anything about Scientology."

The action makes the books eligible for

purchase and use by local school districts, but not mandatory.

Under state education guidelines, schools can spend 30% of their textbook budgets on such materials when the texts meet minimum content requirements that govern such things as the depiction of ethnic groups and references to religion.

A 20-member citizens committee—one of many across the state selected by state and county education officials—reviewed the Hubbard works and decided to add them to the list after requiring a series of revisions, said Emery, an analyst with the curriculum, frameworks and instructional resources office at the state Department of Education.

Emery said some members of the panel expressed concerns about the use of the books because of the link to Hubbard, the controversial religious leader whose name is featured prominently on the front of the books.

The books, which teach a learning method known as Applied Scholastics, are published by Bridge Publications, which also produces literature for the Church of Scientology.

Please see **HUBBARD, B4**

## HUBBARD: School Use of Texts OK'd

Continued from B1

But the panelists could find no legal reason to deny the works a place on the list on the basis of religion, Emery said.

"They were not real thrilled about it," Emery said. "The name L. Ron Hubbard made them not want to approve it. But they had no choice."

The proposed use of Hubbard texts has drawn attention because of the religious nature of Scientology, which has been variously criticized as a cult and a profit-driven enterprise since Hubbard began it in the early 1950s. Critics, including former Scientologists, contend that the works are simply an extension of Hubbard's religious teachings.

But the citizens panel weighed 13 criteria drawn from the state education code in evaluating the texts, including one that bars texts from encouraging religious beliefs.

The panel, Emery said, could find no violation of the guideline on religion. Instead, the panel required Bridge to make changes in the ways the texts portrayed men and women and the disabled, and to add more ethnic minorities to the text or illustrations.

Los Angeles Unified School District officials expressed concern when they were told of the state's action. The Hubbard texts have been the subject of controversy because of a proposal by a teacher and self-acknowledged Scientologist to open a charter school in the east San Fernando Valley that would feature the Applied Scholastics works and teaching methods of

Hubbard. A handful of district teachers also have stepped forward and said they have been using the Hubbard texts and methods in their classrooms for years.

"The plot thickens," said school board President Julie Korenstein. "We'll have to let our attorneys know about this. We somewhat take our orders from the state Department of Education. When they have an approved list, we go to that approved list. This is all brand-new information. It's a total surprise."

Administrators at Applied Scholastics, a private company in Hollywood that promotes the Hubbard teaching methods, applauded the state's decision.

"I think this is fabulous news," said Rena Weinberg, an Applied Scholastics spokeswoman. "I think it is very fitting because these sound educational principles are being recognized as they should, considering they have been in use so many years. The state has scrutinized them, and we are thrilled that this is the case."

Advocates say the Hubbard methods help students improve by removing three fundamental barriers to learning: Students use dictionaries to look up words they do not understand in a process known as "word clearing," they apply their lessons to real life, and they master each rung of material to obtain a thorough understanding of a subject.

Critics contend that the learning methods are simply an extension of Hubbard's religious principles. They note, for example the similarity between the "word clearing"

principle taught in Applied Scholastics and the process of "clearing" away negative experiences in books about Scientology written by Hubbard.

Bridge Publications submitted the Applied Scholastics texts—with such titles as "Learning How to Learn" and "Study Skills for Life"—to the state in May 1996. The texts were reviewed by the citizens panel and Bridge was notified of the need for revisions two months later.

The panel required three sets of changes:

Women, who had originally been depicted in passive roles, had to be shown in more dominant ways; for example, the revised versions had one woman riding a tractor.

Bridge Publications also was required to add more ethnic groups, which it did by including more illustrations of Asian Americans, African Americans and Native Americans, among others.

The publisher also was required to include disabled people in the books, which they did by showing people in wheelchairs, Emery said.

Bridge subsequently submitted its revisions, which were approved by the panel Wednesday. Emery sent Bridge a letter the next day notifying the company that its work had been approved.

As soon as Bridge sends back copies of the revised books, the texts will be officially added to the list of supplementary materials. The books could be included in the September version of a catalog the state distributes to school districts three times a year announcing books on the supplemental list.