

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.

By **DUKE HELFAND**
TIMES STAFF WRITER

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.

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HUBBARD: School Use of Texts OK'd

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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.



SCOTT HARRIS

L. Ron Elementary— a Parody With a Point

The following parody, based on news accounts of semi-secret Scientology teachings, is offered as a cautionary tale as the LAUSD board ponders a proposal to create a 100-student charter school with instruction based on L. Ron Hubbard's teaching methods in the Sunland-Tujunga area:

□

"Good morning, class!"
"GOOD MORNING, MISS
DIANETIC! WE'RE ALL IN OUR
PLACES WITH BRIGHT SHINY
FACES!"

"You certainly are! Why, I don't even

need Mr. E-Meter's help to measure your galvanic skin response! And you should be excited, because today you're going to learn a very important lesson—the lesson of how the universe began. Now, does anybody know the true story of creation?"

"I KNOW, I KNOW! PICK ME, PICK MEEEEEE!!!"

"My goodness, we are eager today. Nicole, why don't you tell us."

"In the beginning, there was L. Ron Hubbard."

"Oh, good try, Nicole! Ron was a great man, a great prophet and teacher.

Please see HARRIS, B4

HARRIS: Mixing School, Scientology

Continued from B1

He figured out how the universe began, but he didn't create it himself."

"Did God create the universe, Miss Dianetic?"

"No, there is no God, Tommy, at least not in the conventional Judeo-Christian sense."

"What about Darwin, Miss Dianetic? Did we all come from monkeys?"

"Well, yes and no, Johnny. You see, we all came from *thetans*. You, me, Ron and the monkeys—we're all *thetans*, remember? Or you might say that we're sort of like *thetan pods*, because the *thetan* is an immortal soul that goes from one body to the next through endless reincarnations over trillions of years.

"Children, it's these *thetans* that created the universe—all the stars and planets, every plant and animal. *Thetans* built bodies for themselves. Some look like you and me, some don't. And you know what happens to a *thetan* when somebody dies?"

"Miss Dianetic, my mommy says if I'm good and say my prayers my spirit will go to heaven. Do *thetans* go to heaven?"

"Oh, Tommy, it sounds like you've been implanted with an engram by a bad *thetan*. As Ron once said, heaven is 'a false dream' and 'a very painful lie.'

"No, what will probably happen when you die is this: Your *thetan* will go to a landing station on Venus where it will be programmed with lies about its past life and its next life. One of the lies is that the *thetan* will then be lovingly placed inside a newborn baby for its return to Earth. But that just isn't true at all. Here's something Ron once said:

"What actually happens to you, you're simply capsuled and dumped in the gulf of lower California. Splash. The hell with ya. And you're on your own, man. If you can get out of that, and through that, and wander around through the cities and find some girl who looks like she is going to get married or have a baby or something like that, you're all set. And if you can find the maternity ward to a hospital or something, you're OK. And you just eventually just pick up a baby."

"That's a direct quote. But Ron showed us that, through Scientology, we can purge all of our engrams—both those that happened by accident during ancient planetary wars and those implanted by evil, power-hungry *thetans*. Does anybody remember what engrams, or 'implants' do? Yes, Nicole."

"Miss Dianetic, Ron said that implants cause all kinds of illness, apathy, degradation, neurosis and insanity."

"Very good! And through Scientology, you can purge the implants. So instead of going to Venus when you die, Scientologists can simply select another location when they, as Ron poetically put it, 'kick the bucket.' Isn't that wonderful?"

"Miss Dianetic, will you tell us about Xenu?"

"Um, you mean Xenu, Johnny. I'm not sure you're ready."

"PLEASE, MISS DIANETIC! PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!"

"Oh, I guess a little can't hurt. Now, I haven't graduated to the Truth Revealed course yet. It's kind of expensive. But I can tell you what I've heard about Xenu. It's a long story, so pay attention.

"Once upon a time, about 75 million years ago, a tyrant named Xenu ruled the Galactic Confederation. That was an alliance of 76 planets, including Earth, which was then called Teegeack.

"To control overpopulation and solidify his power, Xenu ordered his loyal officers to capture beings of all shapes and sizes from the various planets, freeze them in a mix of alcohol and glycol and transport them by the billions to Teegeack in spaceships resembling DC-8s.

"Xenu was as evil and clever as the IRS. Some of the beings were captured after they were duped into showing up for a phony tax investigation.

"Then they were all chained near 10 volcanoes scattered around the planet. After hydrogen bombs were dropped on them, their *thetans* were captured by Xenu's forces and implanted with sexual perversion, religion and other notions to obscure their memory of what Xenu had done.

"Soon after, a revolt ignited. Xenu was imprisoned in a wire

cage within a mountain, where he remains today. But the damage was done."

"Can we go on a field trip to see him, Miss Dianetic?"

"Well, perhaps if you sell enough chocolate bars, we could go there instead of the Celebrity Center."

"Miss Dianetic, Ron was the bestest science fiction writer who ever lived, wasn't he?"

"Yes he was, Tommy. And of course he didn't just write fiction. He revealed the truth.

"You know, children, it's a sad thing, but a lot of people are afraid of the truth, and so a lot of people are afraid of Ron. They think he was some kind of wacko, some kind of charlatan.

"He was a great man. Yet for some reason school board members get worried when a practicing Scientologist proposes the creation of a little itty-bitty charter school that would use Ron's teaching systems.

"They ask lawyers about the separation of state and church. They try to find some way to keep Ron's wisdom out of the classroom, even though some of the teachers have been using his methods for years. The way they pick on Scientologists, they remind me of Xenu himself. "Oh, I'm sorry, Nicole. I got carried away and didn't see your hand. You have a question?"

"Miss Dianetic, what's a charlatan?"

□

OK, parody is supposed to be mildly amusing. But consider this: Let's suppose that it's possible to create an L. Ronics charter school that indeed steered clear of Scientology the Religion. Hey, whatever works. But suppose we take another step in school reform. Now let's suppose we face another ballot measure on school vouchers—as someday surely we will. Would you want your taxes spent at Scientology High?

Scott Harris' column appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Readers may write to Harris at the Times Valley Edition, 20000 Prairie St., Chatsworth 91311, or via e-mail at scott.harris@latimes.com Please include a phone number.

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LETTERS TO THE TIMES

School Use of Hubbard Texts

■ Robert A. Jones' column, "Saved by a Rumor" (July 27) was filled with generalities, slurs (including one that equates the religion of Scientology with colonics) and inferences that the Church of Scientology somehow attempted to sneakily get some "gambit" past the Board of Education in an attempt to "catechize its students." It was also inaccurate in the extreme.

The fact of the matter is that L. Ron Hubbard wrote prodigiously in numerous fields. His books on the subject of study are not a part of the religion of Scientology any more than his prolific output of fiction would be considered part of the church's doctrine. Hubbard's study methods are used today in many countries by farsighted educators. Working on the front lines, they know that the train wreck has already happened in education and that this is a tool of immense value that will help turn the tide. They care, you see, and what is important is that these methods work, not who developed them.

Which is, of course, the only valid point. Not to Jones, though. Because it comes from Hubbard, it is, "not OK, of course." Really? Perhaps if Jones' sole intention was to create controversy then, of course, he would make this kind of assertion, hoping his readers were not intelligent enough to call him on it. Because the teacher who seeks to open Northwest Charter School is a Scientologist, Jones says the school "may never open its doors," and rejoices, adding, "We were saved..."

To once again use his own words, the "truly, horribly embarrassing" thing about his column is that he ignored the facts and instead engaged on a mission to malign well-meaning individuals who, no matter what their religious beliefs, do care about our society.

NORMAN STARKEY, Trustee
Estate of L. Ron Hubbard
Hollywood

■ Re "Hubbard Teachings in Public Classrooms," July 27:

I'll give Hubbard credit for one thing; he was the master of jargon. When it comes to masking basic teaching techniques with complicated language, he outdid even the state Department of Education. As for his "empowering technology," perhaps I and all my fellow teachers have been unknowingly trained by Scientologists. We routinely help students relate classroom ideas to real life while presenting the material incrementally; vocabulary study is basic to most lessons. If I had thought to use terms like "lack of mass," "skipped gradient" and "word clearing," perhaps I could have had my name on the cover of a textbook, hopefully in giant letters like Hubbard's.

Scientologists fought long and hard to be recognized as a religion. Now it's time for them to sit back and count the money that their tax-exempt status earns them, and to keep their hands off of our public schools. They can't have it both ways.

SUZANNE MASTROIANNI
Hemet

Scientologists win partial court victory

EDITORIAL

ON JULY 28, an appeal court in Lyon reduced the sentences of six members of the Scientology movement charged with responsibility for the suicide of one of their followers. The court also ruled that the "Church of Scientology" was entitled to call itself a religion. In so doing, the appeal court gave the movement created by the science-fiction writer Lafayette Ron Hubbard in 1954 a seal of approval it probably did not expect.

The court justified its decision by invoking an "absolute" freedom of worship — anchored in the French tradition of freedom of thought. It thus confirmed a position that the French courts had already adopted in 1980.

It is not the job of either the state or the judiciary to become involved in the debate over whether Scientology is a religion or a cult. For almost a century now, France has enjoyed perfectly adequate legislation in the form of the 1905 law separating church and state, which specifies that "the republic does not recognise, remunerate or subsidise any form of worship". The key question is whether the religious association concerned respects the law and the freedom of the individual.

Although the court of appeal has recognised the existence of a Scientology "community" and of its followers' "shared faith", the "victory" should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the leaders of the movement in Lyon have been sentenced for fraud and manslaughter.

In its ruling, the appeal court noted that Scientology, as practised in Lyon, was an enterprise whose sole aim was the improper solicitation of believers' money. It remarked that in certain cases the techniques used by Scientology resulted in "a veritable manipulation of the mind".

The anti-cult activists who have exposed the shocking methods of indoctrination, harassment and blackmail used by Scientologists will feel that the court of appeal has been too lenient. But the magistrates felt it was not their business to assess the general doctrine of the Church of Scientology.

The decision will probably revive the debate about how to deal with cults. When it handed in its report in January last year, the parliamentary commission of inquiry into cults, which classified the Church of Scientology as a cult, felt it was "neither useful nor opportune" to draw up anti-cult legislation and that France's existing laws provided the necessary guarantees.

The Lyon magistrates, on the other hand, pointed out that the job of the law was to judge acts alone and not social phenomena.

The day after the magistrates' decision, the public prosecutor's office referred the case to the supreme court of appeal.

(July 30)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY (LE MONDE SECTION) AUGUST 16, 1997: 13

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Hubbard Textbooks

■ Rena Weinberg's column ("Education Is the Real Issue," Aug. 3) about L. Ron Hubbard's textbooks had a serious error. The materials which Weinberg refers to were reviewed in July 1996 and did not pass legal compliance. Therefore the books should not be in use in any California public school.

During the past year, Bridge Publications has submitted proposed revisions to address the legal compliance concerns. However,

until completely corrected versions of the books are reviewed, there is no final consideration for approval. We have not received corrected published materials. The materials currently for sale are not approved for legal compliance.

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Sacramento

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Hubbard-Inspired Textbooks Rejected

■ **Schools:** State review board says the revised books based on ideas of Scientology founder misrepresent minorities and the disabled. Publisher vows more changes.

By DUKE HELFAND
TIMES STAFF WRITER

State education officials on Monday rejected the latest version of a series of textbooks inspired by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, saying the books failed to properly depict disabled people and minorities.

The publisher, Bridge Publications, is seeking to have five books based on Hubbard's educational ideas approved for use in California public classrooms as supplemental texts.

But in a two-page letter faxed to the publisher Monday, the state Department of Education said revisions to the original series failed to adequately address concerns raised by a 20-member citizens review panel.

The panel is one of several across the state that review supplemental materials to ensure that the works comply with the state's social content laws.

The effort to include the books on the state-approved list—allowing, but not obligating, schools to buy them—has raised concerns among some educators and civil libertarians. Critics, including some former Scientologists, contend that Hubbard's "Study Technology" is actually a means of drawing new adherents into Scientology. Bridge

Publications, they note, also publishes literature for the Church of Scientology.

However, the citizens panel concluded that the books met the state's guidelines on religion, which bar textbooks from encouraging particular religious beliefs.

The books were not approved by the state because they misrepresented the disabled and minorities, state officials said.

For example, disabled characters were shown with canes, representative more of the aging process than of a disability, said Ruth McKenna, the state's chief deputy superintendent of public instruction.

A disabled character in the texts also was shown in a wheelchair alone, isolated from others. In addition, the books did not depict enough disabled people.

The state asked the publisher to show some of the main characters as being disabled and have them interact with others.

Bridge Publications had originally submitted the texts to the state in May 1996, only to have them rejected later that year. The firm submitted revised versions in August.

"The panel reviewed the final galleys to see if the changes were sufficient and determined that they

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BOOKS

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were not," McKenna said. "I've now looked at the galley proofs and . . . I agree with the panel's concerns."

According to the state's letter, written by McKenna, the citizens panel concluded that the revisions were too weak.

In the case of minorities, for example, the state said the changes were accomplished by shading the faces of existing characters. One character ended up appearing white on certain pages but as an ethnic minority on other pages.

Bridge did meet the review panel's requests on one point: It showed more female characters in dominant roles.

Bridge officials said they welcomed the state's critique, saying McKenna's two-page letter was the first detailed summary of needed changes they had received since they initiated the approval process. They vowed to make the necessary changes and resubmit a new set of books by the end of next month.

"We should easily be able to comply," said Scott Welch, senior vice president of operations for Bridge.

Supporters say the Hubbard books and methods offer three techniques that help students overcome common barriers: Students use dictionaries to look up words they do not understand, apply their lessons to real life and gain a thorough understanding of a subject through incremental learning.

The books are not about any specific school subjects as such, but about the process of learning. Titles include "Learning How to Learn," "How to Use a Dictionary" and "Study Skills for Life."

The publisher thought its books had been given preliminary approval in July. A state official notified it in writing that its proposed revisions met the state's social content guidelines—a letter that, in hindsight, may have been confusing, McKenna said.

After the state's customary procedure, the company submitted its final hard copy version in late August for review by the citizens panel.

However, the panel found objections in that copy.

"We never give final approval until we see the book," McKenna said. "That's our safety net."

McKenna said such approval does not mean the state endorses the books, but merely that schools are free to buy them.