

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: \_\_\_\_\_ N. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: June 23, 2011

Topic: Report on History and Social Science Textbooks Published by Five Ponds Press

Presenter: Dr. Linda Wallinger, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

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## Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by

State or federal law or regulation

Board of Education regulation

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested at this meeting  Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action

date \_\_\_\_\_

action \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Information:

On March 24, 2011, the Virginia Board of Education took action to remove two textbooks published by Five Ponds Press, Inc., *Our Virginia: Past and Present* (1<sup>st</sup> edition) and *Our America to 1865* (1<sup>st</sup> edition), from its approved textbook list. The Board also directed that if Five Ponds Press submitted for review the second edition of the same textbooks, the Department of Education was to conduct an expedited review “in accordance with the terms of the Board’s newly-adopted textbook review process” and bring to the Board a recommendation regarding approval of the replacement editions. Finally, the Board requested a corrective action plan from Five Ponds Press in response to reviews of its history and social science textbooks for kindergarten through grade three: *Our World Let’s Go!*, *Our World Then & Now*, *Our World Near & Far*, and *Our World Far & Wide*. As part of the revised textbook approval process, also adopted in March 2011, the Board delegated the approval of corrective action plans not involving significant errors to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

## Summary of Major Elements:

On May 27, 2011, the Superintendent of Public Instruction approved on behalf of the Board of Education the corrective action plan that Five Ponds Press submitted. The plan is posted on the Department of Education’s Web site at

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/textbooks/review\\_process/corrective\\_action\\_plans](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/textbooks/review_process/corrective_action_plans). The plan

contains three components:

- Errata sheets for three of the four books, noting items to be changed in the next printing, and to be changed online by June 15, 2011 (An errata sheet for the first-grade book, *Our World Then & Now*, was not required);
- Information that will not be included on the errata sheets, but will be changed in the next printing and changed online by June 15, 2011; and
- Responses to comments and suggestions made by the reviewers that did not require further changes.

As a condition of approval, Five Ponds Press, Inc., has also posted the errata sheets to its Web site at <http://www.fivepondspressbooks.com/Errata/K3Errata.pdf>.

Five Ponds Press has indicated that it is working on new editions of its textbooks for Virginia Studies and U.S. History I, *Our Virginia: Past and Present* and *Our America to 1865*, respectively. The terms of the revised textbook approval process require that when a publisher submits textbooks for review, it must: 1) certify that textbooks they have submitted for review have been thoroughly examined for content accuracy; and 2) agree that if factual or editing errors are identified, the publisher will submit a corrective action plan to the Department of Education for review and approval by the Board of Education or the superintendent of public instruction if so delegated by the Board. Additionally, the publisher must provide correlations to the Standards of Learning for the particular course for the textbooks.

In an effort to expedite the review process, the Department has agreed that if Five Ponds Press submits revised editions of the two textbooks, a printout of a PDF file for each of the books will suffice for review purposes rather than requiring the publisher to produce proof copies. The Department has indicated to Five Ponds Press that in order for textbooks to be considered for review and approval for use early in the 2011-2012 school year, it would need to receive the printouts by June 27, 2011, so that committee members have sufficient time to conduct their review.

In accord with the textbook approval process, the Department will convene a review committee comprised of, at a minimum, a teacher, a division-level content specialist, and a subject-matter expert. These individuals will have approximately two weeks to review the textbooks and provide comment. The publisher would then have four to five days to respond to the comments and resolve any issues. Finally, Department of Education staff would have one to two days to prepare the materials before they must be posted publicly on July 22, 2011, prior to the Board meeting on July 28, 2011.

The *Code of Virginia* requires a 30-day public comment period prior to approval of textbooks:

§ 22.1-17.5. Public notice and comment regarding certain resource guides.

In order to provide appropriate opportunity for input from the general public, parents, teachers, and local school boards, the Board of Education shall solicit public comment prior to revising or adopting Standards of Learning resource guides and lists of recommended textbooks in any Standards of Learning academic subject. Thirty days prior to soliciting public comment, the Board shall publish notice of its intended action. Interested parties shall be given reasonable opportunity to be heard and present information prior to final action of the Board.

The Board shall make such resource guides available for public inspection at least thirty days prior to final adoption or revision, as the case may be.

The 30-day public comment period would begin following the Board meeting on July 28, 2011, and extend through August 27, 2011. The Department would then bring a recommendation regarding the two textbooks to the Board of Education for final review on September 22, 2011.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

N/A

**Impact on Resources:**

N/A

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

N/A