Mrs. Terry M. Lathan  
One Cypress Lake  
Theodore, Alabama 36582  

January 10, 2012  

To: Members of the Alabama State School Board of Education  

Re: Alabama Mathematics Textbook Selections  

Dear Members of the Board:  

Please find attached a brief summary of several mathematic books that I had the opportunity to review. As an appointee by Governor Robert Bentley to this committee, I was very limited in time and instruction in this process as the vetting of the books started in the early Spring. Even though not confirmed by the Alabama Senate yet, I felt it was my personal obligation to try and fulfill this honor.  

The Governor’s appointees were not involved in the textbook selection until after the process was completed. Therefore, I, and I’m sure the others, did the best we could basically on our own. For myself, I went to the University of South Alabama in Mobile and found the books to review.  

Because of the massive amounts of time it would have taken to review them all, I chose to review the 6th grade books, but not those that 6th grade merged with, for example “4-6” or “6-12”.  

I also did some independent research gathering information on some of the 6th grade books to narrow down those that might have some questionable problems for our students that you might need to take into consideration as well as those teachers around the state that will be looking at the books.  

The attached report is what I found. Please be aware that the absence of a mention of a book is not an endorsement for or against it. I have also placed my recommendations or comments in the order of strongest to weakest, in my opinion.  

I also would like to suggest that any book found by the AL State Math Textbook Committee that met prior to our appointments that was deemed anything less that “Strong” be moved to the back of the line in consideration. I do not believe that our students should settle for anything less than a “Strong” recommendation in the rating process.  

As a former sixth grade math teacher and a past member of the Mobile County public schools math textbook committee, it was a pleasure to remember the joy of being a teacher again.  

Thank you for your consideration,  

Mrs. Terry M. Lathan  
Mobile, Alabama
HIGH RECOMMENDATION:

1.) “Math in Focus”  
Author: Dr. Fong Ho Kheong  
Publisher: HMMH  
   -many math problems and practice for students to master  
   -explanation of “thought bubbles” is helpful for a student  
   -Many supplements to choose from at reasonable pricing  
   -Teacher bundle: full of choices and help  
   -Note: Singapore mathematics students are ranked #1 in the world for their math skills. The author of this book is from Singapore and has been instrumental in the mathematics field in his country.  
   -rated “strong” by the AL Textbook Committee

HIGH CONCERNS:

2.) “Envision Math CC Standards”  
Author: R. Charles  
Publisher: Scott Foreman  
   -had missing images and text for the reviewer to see therefore a finished book should be shown to the Board before making a decision as possibly adopting something you haven’t seen in full for our students would not be cautious for the whole content  
   -very high pricing throughout all materials (examples range from $598-5700)  
   -too wordy in content  
   -not enough practice for students  
   -no student answers in the back of the book to check work  
   -rated “strong” from the AL Textbook Committee

3.) “Everyday Mathematics”  
   -not a hard back book and the binding was already torn and coming apart. This book has had very few people handle it, but yet it was coming apart as it is assembled weakly. This book would not last long in the hands of students which would be a waste of money.  
   -too many ‘games’, very expensive CD’s ($185-900)  
   -most pages had LESS THAN 10 PROBLEMS for the students to actually work in a workbook, some pages only had ONE problem to work.  
   -not enough practice for students  
   -too wordy  
   -multiple books to buy for students  
   -rated “strong” from the AL Textbook Committee

4.) “Pearson Connected Math 2”  
Author: Lappan  
Publisher: Prentice Hall  
   -could not find this book to review but please see the attached article about this series as reported by Forbes on December 22, 2011. This is not an indictment for or against the use of the books in Alabama, but the information should be known by the Board in making their decisions.  
   -noted many supplements that could be expensive to the system (71 pieces)  
   -rated “strong” by the AL Textbook Committee
CONCERNS:

5. “Course 1 Student Edition”
Author: Hake  Publisher: Saxon
- too wordy for a math book
- not enough practice for students
- no student answers found in the back to check
- noted many supplements that could be quite expensive to the system
- rated “moderate” by the AL Textbook Committee

6. “Math Connects, Course 1”
Author: Carter, Cuevas, Day  Publisher: SEG/McGraw Hill
- pretty book but not enough practice for students
- too wordy
- limited resources for support
- rated “moderate” by the AL State Textbook Committee

Author: Larson  Publisher: Big Ideas
- not enough practice for students
- seemed very elementary based for 6th grade
- little supplementary support to purchase (manipulatives, transparencies, workbooks, etc…)
- rated “moderate” by the AL Textbook Committee

8. “Prentice Hall Middle Grades Math, Course 1”
Author: Charles  Publisher: Prentice Hall
- pretty book but not enough practice for students
- very wordy
- no supplemental materials to go with the series
- rated “strong” by the AL Textbook Committee

Author: Bennett  Publisher: Hold McDougal
- not enough practice for students
- too wordy which takes up space for actual math problems and practice
- little supplementary support to purchase (manipulatives, transparencies, workbooks, etc…)
- rated “strong” by the AL Textbook Committee

10. “AL Student Bundle 6”
Author: Dixon, Larson  Publisher: HMH School
- not enough practice for students
- not enough explanation for students
- very colorful book, recycled paper
- a lot of pieces to purchase and keep up with
- rated “strong” by AL Textbook Committee
No Educator Left Behind: Pearson, Leading Scorer of Standardized Tests, Subpoenaed

The New York Attorney General’s office launched an investigation this week into whether or not the education and testing of the state’s school children was sold to the highest bidder. A cloud of suspicion surrounds the Pearson Foundation, a nonprofit subsidiary of publicly traded Pearson Education Inc. (NYSE:PSO), the nation’s largest educational publisher and subject of a previous Crotty on Forbes column. The Pearson Foundation is being investigated for potentially lobbying state education officials improperly and footing the bill for those officials to take trips to numerous international locales.

According to the New York Times, subpoenas reportedly issued to the Pearson Foundation and Pearson Education, Inc. by the office of the Attorney General, Eric T. Schneiderman, are seeking documents and information related to their activities with state education officials. Those
activities include trips to “educational conferences,” and expensive accommodations and more at those conferences, in overseas destinations such as Singapore, London, Helsinki and Rio de Janeiro.

Pearson Education, Inc. was recently awarded a five-year $32 million contract to administer state testing in New York. However, eyebrows were raised back in 2010 when, following a conference in London, Pearson received a $1 million testing services contract with the New York State Department of Education. The conference was bankrolled by the Pearson Foundation and was attended by former New York State Education Commissioner David M. Steiner.

The state is seeking to uncover whether Pearson, Inc., via its tax-exempt foundation, used the bikini-clad beaches of Brazil as well as the historical artifacts and shopping of London as leverage to win lucrative state education business for the firm. News reports since the investigation was launched quote state education employees as being unaware that Pearson was funding the trips or lobbying for state education dollars.

However, due to its tax-exempt status, law prohibits the Pearson Foundation from partaking in the undisclosed lobbying of state officials. The foundation is allowed to partake in lobbying, but any lobbying activities done by the foundation must be disclosed in their annual filings with the office of the attorney general. Moreover, as quoted in an October 9, 2011 New York Times column cataloguing ethical lapses by the company, Pearson’s use of high-end conferences to win education businesses struck attorney Marcus S. Owens, former director of the IRS’s Exempt Organizations Division, as akin to “the influence-buying junkets that convicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff arranged for members of Congress.”

The multi-million dollar contracts gave Pearson Education, Inc. control over New York state’s standardized tests – the controversial No Child Left Behind benchmark by which New York measures the performance of its students, teachers, principals, and schools – as well as gave Pearson the inside track to selling curriculums and textbooks within the state. According to several sources, Pearson Education Inc. have numerous multi-million dollar contracts with states throughout the country.

If eventually charged and found guilty of the offenses, the Pearson Foundation could have its important tax-exempt status stripped and be subject to thousands of dollars in fines. However, the damage to the reputation, and stock price, of Pearson Education, Inc. could be far worse.

Pearson did not reply to requests for comment on this story.

December 21, 2011

Testing Firm Faces Inquiry on Free Trips for Officials

By WINNIE HU

New York State’s attorney general is investigating whether the Pearson Foundation, the nonprofit arm of one of the nation’s largest educational publishers, acted improperly to influence state education officials by paying for overseas trips and other perks.

The office of the attorney general, Eric T. Schneiderman, issued subpoenas this week to the foundation and to Pearson Education seeking documents and information related to their activities with state education officials, including at least four education conferences — in London, Helsinki, Singapore and Rio de Janeiro — since 2008, according to people familiar with the investigation.

At issue is whether the activities of the tax-exempt Pearson Foundation, which is prohibited by state law from engaging in undisclosed lobbying, were used to benefit Pearson Education, a for-profit company, according to these people. Pearson sells standardized tests, packaged curriculums and Prentice Hall textbooks.

Specifically, the attorney general’s investigation is looking at whether foundation employees improperly sought to influence state officials or procurement processes to obtain lucrative state contracts, and whether the employees failed to disclose lobbying activities in annual filings with the attorney general’s office. The inquiry follows two columns about the conferences by Michael Winerip in The New York Times this fall.

If there is evidence that the foundation engaged in substantial lobbying and failed to disclose it, it could face fines and lose its tax-exempt status under state and federal laws. No subpoenas were issued to state education officials, the people with knowledge of the matter said.

In a statement Wednesday, a Pearson Education spokeswoman said, “As a matter of policy, Pearson does not comment on government inquiries or potential legal proceedings.” A spokesman said the foundation “does not currently have a comment” about the inquiry, and

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/22/education/new-york-attorney-general-is-investigating... 1/10/2012
added, “nor is it our practice to offer comment on legal proceedings or government inquiries.”

In New York, Pearson Education most recently won a five-year, $32 million contract to administer state tests, and it maintains a $1 million contract for testing services with the State Education Department, according to state records. The last contract was awarded after David M. Steiner, then the state education commissioner, attended a conference in London in June 2010 that was organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers and underwritten by the Pearson Foundation.

Dr. Steiner, currently a dean and professor at Hunter College, said on Wednesday that his trip had been cleared by an ethics officer at the Education Department. “I am sure that there was no sales pitch,” he said, adding that “given the many attendees and presentations, I cannot be sure that there was nobody speaking at some point in the conference who was from Pearson rather than the Pearson Foundation or other organizations.”

But Dr. Steiner said “there is zero link” between his trip and the state’s subsequent contract with Pearson. He said that he had no direct involvement in the decision to select Pearson and that his role was to report the recommendation to hire Pearson, made by the department’s staff, to the Board of Regents. “I followed exactly our rules and protocols,” he said. “I still believe it was a useful and informative and professional activity that had been properly cleared.”

Tom Dunn, a spokesman for the Education Department, said that state officials selected Pearson after a competitive bidding process in which the department’s staff members scored and ranked each bid. He added that the attorney general and the state comptroller both reviewed and approved the contract.

“Our contracting process is always followed to the letter,” he said, “and the Pearson contract was no exception.”

But some advocates for students and academics said Wednesday that the investigation was long overdue.

“Despite a history of scoring errors, contract manipulation and corporate misbehavior, there’s been almost no public oversight of companies such as Pearson,” said Bob Schaeffer, a spokesman for FairTest, an advocacy group opposed to standardized testing. “It’s great that New York’s attorney general has now decided to examine the examiners and begin holding them accountable.”