

ALICE Model Civics in Schools¹

Rationale:

Civics education will promote informed and active participation in democratic processes among the state's youth. This law is enacted to help young people acquire and use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be civically engaged in the future. Americans have become increasingly disengaged from our civic and political institutions. Americans under the age of 25 are less likely to vote or otherwise participate in the electoral process than their older counterparts or young people of past decades. School-based civics education has declined over a period of decades. As many as three secondary school courses in democracy, civics and government were commonly required until the 1960s. Schools are best suited to improving the status quo and providing students with the knowledge they need to become good citizens, including instruction in American government, history, law and democracy. Such instruction should include: classroom discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events; community service opportunities linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction; extracurricular activities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities; student participation in school governance; and student participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.

Summary: An act requiring the [State Board of Education] to, develop and implement comprehensive civics education curricula, establish programming to encourage participation in democratic processes, register qualified students to vote, provide requirements for course grade and credit for promotion at all high schools [and middle schools], in order to improve students' civic knowledge, skills and attitudes.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act shall be called the "Civics in Schools Act".

SECTION 2. SCOPE, APPLICABILITY, EXCEPTIONS, EXCLUSIONS. This Act applies to all students in high school [and middle schools], effective with the [school year].

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS. "Agency" means Department of Education, Department of Public Instruction, Superintendent.

¹ This model was drafted by ALICE staff. ALICE would like to thank all those who provided feedback on this draft.

SECTION 4. CIVICS EDUCATION CURRICULA ESTABLISHED.

(a) The [State Board of Education] shall develop and implement comprehensive civics education curricula for all [high schools and middle schools]. Such curricula shall include the following:

(1) Formal instruction, about the fundamental principles of core documents, institutions, and processes of local, state, and federal government, such as the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, voting, the role and structure of government, and the major themes in the history and laws of the United States;

(2) Classroom discussion of current local, national and international issues, public policies, and events that put into social and political context the facts related to civic knowledge, as well as the encounters students have through their experiential learning opportunities;

(3) Classroom materials and discussion of the processes of political and social change, particularly those that illustrate the ways that change has occurred historically and the constitutional right that individuals and groups have to promote change. This discussion should reference the diverse values, opinions, and interests of Americans and the ways in which they are represented by elected officials, interest groups, and political parties; and the relationship between government and the other sectors of society;

(4) Classroom discussion of the values, responsibilities, rights, and benefits related to being an engaged and responsible citizen of one's community, state, and nation, as well as discussion of individuals who have made a difference at the local, state, national, or international levels.

(5) Instruction and information on the voting process including: how to register, how to vote in an election using a ballot, how to vote using an absentee ballot, and suffrage.

[Policy Option: *Professional Development*²]

SECTION 5. PROGRAMMING.

(a) The [State Board of Education] shall create civic programming to include the following:

(1) Service learning and community service opportunities that allow students to apply what they have learned through formal curriculum;

(2) Civic engagement projects that allows students to engage in substantive work on serious public issues and reflect on their experience;

(3) Service programs that allow students to pursue political responses to problems consistent with laws that require public schools to be nonpartisan ;

(4) School governance opportunities, where students are able to participate in the management of their schools and classrooms.

[Policy Options: *Civic Programming*³]

² The [state] could allocate funding to Districts specifically for professional development of high school teachers in civics education.

(b) Subject to appropriation, funding for civic education professional development for [high school] teachers must be provided by line item appropriation made to the [State Board of Education] for that purpose. [2007 Illinois HB 2787](#).

³ The [state] could create a youth advisory council to establish a permanent opportunity for youth civic engagement.

(1) The legislative youth advisory council is established to examine issues of importance to youth, including but not limited to education, employment, strategies to increase youth participation in state and municipal government, safe environments for youth, substance abuse, emotional and physical health, foster care, poverty, homelessness, and youth access to services on a statewide and municipal basis.

(2) The council consists of twenty-two members as provided in [this subsection] who, at the time of appointment, are aged fourteen to eighteen.

(a) [Five] members shall be selected by [each of the two major caucuses in the senate, appointed by the secretary of the senate.]

(b) [Five] members shall be selected by [each of the two major caucuses in the house of representatives, appointed by the chief clerk of the house of representatives.]

(c) The [governor] shall appoint two members.

(3) The [office of superintendent of public instruction] shall provide administration, coordination, and facilitation assistance to the council. The [senate and house of representatives] may provide policy and fiscal briefings and assistance with drafting proposed legislation. The [senate and the house of

SECTION 6. GRADUATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) Commencing with classes graduating in [2014], and for each graduating class thereafter, the [State Board of Education] shall not permit any student to graduate from high school or grant a diploma to any student who has not satisfactorily completed a minimum of one half credit course in civics education. This civics course includes:

(1) Roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local governments.

(2) The structures and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government

(3) The meaning and significance of historic documents, such as the Constitution.

[Policy Option: *Graduation Requirements*⁴]

SECTION 7. STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION AND PREREGISTRATION.

(a) The [State] shall promote civic knowledge allow voter preregistration. A person who is at least 16 years of age but will not be 18 years of age by the date of the next election and who is otherwise qualified to register may preregister to vote by and shall be automatically registered upon reaching the age of eligibility following verification of the person's qualification and address.

representatives] shall each develop internal policies relating to staff assistance provided to the council.
[2005 Washington SB 5254](#)

⁴ To create more incentive for students and teachers, The [State Board of Education] could mandate an standardized assessment at the end of the civics course and require a passing score to receive credit.

During the [school year], each student's performance on the statewide, standardized end-of-course assessment in civics education shall constitute [30] percent of the student's final course grade. Beginning with the [school year], a student must earn a passing score on the end-of-course assessment in civics education in order to pass the course and receive course credit.
[2010 Florida House Bill 105](#)

(b) The [State Board of Education] shall make available to its students and others who are eligible to register and preregister to vote the required application forms. These materials shall be available both as part of civics courses and from the school administration.

(c) The [State Board of Education] shall develop policies and programming to promote student voter registration and preregistration, and shall:

(1) Keep sufficient supply of application forms for students and others who are eligible to register and preregister to vote;

(2) Collaborate with county boards of elections to conduct voter registration and preregistration in high schools;

(3) Conduct voter registration and preregistration drives at public high schools in accordance with local board of education policies, school system administrative procedures, and guidelines of the [State Board of Elections].

[Policy Option: *Voting*⁵]

[Policy Option: *Implementation*⁶]

⁵ The [state] could allow 17 year olds to vote in primary elections to facilitate civic engagement.

Every person who will attain the full age of eighteen years by the date of the general election who is a citizen of the United States, having resided in this State for the period established by the [General Assembly] ... shall be entitled to vote in the primary election. [2010 Vermont Proposal](#).

The [State] could permit high school students to register to vote when they obtain their Driver's License.

The [Department] shall permit registration of any citizen and bona fide resident of this State 16 years of age or older through the [Division of Motor Vehicles] as set forth in [section], provided that such applicant shall not be a qualified voter unless the person will be 18 years of age or older on or before the day of the general election next succeeding the applicant's registration. [2010 Delaware House Bill 381](#).

⁶ Rather than requiring the State Board of Education to manage the civics education initiatives, the State could establish an advisory Commission on Civics education. This Commission could be charged with implementing and overseeing the changes required by this Act:

(1) The Commission on Civics Education is established as an advisory commission in the executive branch of state government.

SECTION 8. SAVINGS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS. This [act] does not affect students who graduated before the effective [school year].

SECTION 9. REPEALS AND AMEND. The following acts and parts of acts are repealed: [inserts state laws affected here].

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE. This [act] shall take effect with the start of the next school year.

SOURCE LAWS.

2010 Florida House Bill 105-

<http://flhouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loadoc.aspx?FileName= h0105er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0105&Session=2010>

2009 North Carolina House Bill 908-

<http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/House/PDF/H908v7.pdf>

Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools-

<http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/educators/six-proven-practices>

Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools-

<http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/f0/5/171/1/Guardian-of-Democracy-report.pdf>

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Comprehensive Information:

Campaign to Promote Civic Education: Overview of Civic Education Vitality (By The Center for Civics Education)

- o http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=overview_of_campaign

Advocacy Toolkit - Including: Talking Points, FAQ's, Platforms, Further Research (By Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools)

(2) The 23-member Commission on Civics Education, [is] comprised of the [Governor, Lieutenant Governor, legislators, executive branch officials, and citizens].

(3) The purposes of the Commission shall include (i) the education of students on the importance of citizen involvement in a representative democracy, (ii) the promotion of the study of state and local government among the [Commonwealth's] citizenry, and (iii) the enhancement of communication and collaboration among organizations in the [Commonwealth] that conduct civic education programs. [2005 Virginia House Bill 1769](#).

- <http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/64/1/190/AdvocacyToolkit.pdf>
Guide- Advancing the Civic Mission of Schools: What Schools, Districts and, State and Federal Leaders Can do (By: Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools)
- <http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/e2/9/189/AdvancingCivicMissionofSchools.pdf>

Recent Reports:

Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools (By: Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and the Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics at the University of Pennsylvania)

- <http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/f0/5/171/1/Guardian-of-Democracy-report.pdf>

Understanding A Diverse Generation: Youth Civic Engagement in the United States (By: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)

- http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/CIRCLE_cluster_report2010.pdf

Commission on Civics Education in the Nation's Schools Annual Report 2010-2011 (By: American Bar Association)

- http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/public_education/civiced_yearendreport-2010-2011.pdf

A New Civic Mission of Schools (By: Carnegie Review)

- http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/public_education/carnegiereportcivic_mission_of_schools_2011.pdf

Fault Lines in Our Democracy: Public Knowledge, Voting Behavior and Civic Engagement in the United States (By: Educational Testing Services)

- http://www.ets.org/s/research/19386/rsc/pdf/18719_fault_lines_report.pdf

Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action (By: The U.S. Department of Education)

- <http://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/road-map-call-to-action.pdf>

The State of State U.S. History Standards (By: The Thomas B. Fordham Institute)

- http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/public_education/stateofstateushistorystandards_2011_fordhaminstitute.pdf

Service Learning in the United States: Status of Institutionalization (By: Education Commission of the States)

- <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/01/55/10155.pdf>

The Civic Mission of Schools: A Review of the Research (By: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)

- <http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/v7.i2.1.pdf>

State Specific Examples

- No Excuses: Schools and Districts that Make Preparing Students for Citizenship a Priority, and How Others Can Do It, Too (By: Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools)
 - http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/2f/d/182/No_Excuses_Report.pdf
- Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois Schools (By: McCormick Foundation)

- <http://www.civiced.org/pdfs/campaignToPromote/IL%20Civic%20Blueprint.pdf>

Books:

- No Citizen Left Behind* By: Meira Levinson's (Harvard University Press, 2012)
Teaching America: The Case for Civic Education edited by David Feith (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011)
- Website: <http://www.teachingamerica.org/>

Youth Voting Reports:

- Joining Young, Voting Young: The Effects of Youth Voluntary Associations on Early Adult Voting
- http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/WP_73_Thomas_McFarland.pdf?%3E
- 2010 Issues in Election Administration: Enfranchising America's Youth By: Project Vote
- http://www.projectvote.org/images/publications/Youth%20Voting/2010_Policy_Paper-Enfranchising_American_Youth.pdf
- Best Practices for Implementing Effective High School Voter Registration Programs By: Project Vote
- http://www.projectvote.org/images/publications/Youth%20Voting/Best_Practices_for_HS_Registration_Programs.pdf
- Voter Pre-Registration Programs BY: Dr. Michael P. McDonald, Associate Professor, George Mason University
- http://elections.gmu.edu/Preregistration_Report.pdf

Exemplary Programming:

- Discovering Justice: The James St. Clair Court Education Project
- <http://www.discoveringjustice.org/>
- Street Law Inc.
- <http://www.streetlaw.org/en/home>
- Mikva Challenge
- <http://www.mikvachallenge.org/>
- Close Up Foundation
- <http://www.closeup.org/default.aspx>
- Facing History, Facing Ourselves
- <http://www.facing.org/>

Organizations for In Depth Information:

- ABA Commission on Civics Education in the Nation's Schools
- <http://www.americanbar.org/groups/civics.html>
- Education Commission of the States: Civic Education
- <http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=19>
- The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
- <http://www.civicyouth.org/>
- National Council for the Social Studies
- <http://www.socialstudies.org/>

The Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics

- <http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/>

Center for Civic Education: Campaign to Promote Civic Education

- http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=campaign_to_promote

Additional Websites/Resources:

The Choices Program:

- <http://www.choices.edu/>

Youth Leadership Initiative:

- <http://www.youthleadership.net/>

National Alliance for Civic Education

- <http://www.cived.net/>

National Conference on Citizenship

- <http://www.ncoc.net/>

National Center for Learning and Citizenship

- http://www.ecs.org/html/ProjectsPartners/nclc/nclc_main.htm

American Enterprise Institute Program on American Citizenship

- <http://www.citizenship-aei.org/>

Fairvote: Center for Voting and Democracy

- <http://www.fairvote.org/17-year-old-primary-voting-fact-sheet#.T9urz7VSRX1>

Progressive States: Election Reform

- <http://www.progressivestates.org/policy/election-reform/1933>