

Civics Education Survey

Committee Report

May 2021

Committee Members

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Introduction

In pursuit of a Chapter annual goal for 2021-2022, a committee was formed to conduct a survey of the status of civics education in the public schools in the tri-county area, which consists of Lake, Marion and Sumter counties. The members met and conducted research during March and April 2021.

Research methodology included internet searches, telephone conversations and email exchanges with State Department of Education (FL DOE) personnel, meetings held via electronic media, attendance at board of education meetings, document searches, committee members' prior knowledge, and committee discussion.

Committee members agreed on an elegant mission for their work: Ascertain what is required in public schools in the tri-county area pertaining to civics education.

Scope and depth of inquiry

These questions guided the committee's inquiries:

What does the state say must be taught, and what is the accountability for determining acquisition of student outcomes?

At a minimum, does curriculum include student outcomes that address

How government works?

How to be a responsible voter?

The committee conducted a survey of K-12 curricula, with particular focus on middle and high school grades. The Florida Department of Education includes civics education as a content strand within social studies.

Requirements

The Florida State Board of Education accredited high school diploma requires that the student earns a minimum of 24 credits (Carnegie units)

Included in the 24 credit requirement are related credits – US History (1 cr.), World History (1 cr.), US Government (1/2 cr.), Economics (1/2 cr.)

Civics is included within the social studies content area, and requires one of three standardized end-of-course assessments (biology and history are the other two).

FL DOE 2018-19 Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and End-of-Course Assessment – according to the FL DOE Director of Standards, proposed updated standards public comment period should be posted late March this year (not posted as of 4/1). 2014 standards can be accessed at <http://cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard#0> Accountability for student performance in achieving the state standard at a minimum of sixty percent is established by state statute as a standardized performance assessment.

12/2019 Civic Literacy in Florida Schools – the governor’s office and education commissioner offered school districts the opportunity to voluntarily administer a pilot civic literacy assessment, with the passing grade of 60%

FL DOE was an early implementer of the Sandra Day O’Connor Civic Learning Act of 2013, which, in part, introduces civics and voter education at the middle school level. The state’s civics education was hailed nationally as a model curriculum framework in 2014.

Upon request, the Commissioner of Education identified the standards director of the FL DOE. The standards director provided the current social studies standards K-12, and explained that civics is included within social studies. According to the information provided, social studies standards are being updated, and the public comment period was expected to be announced possibly during March 2021.

The DOE Director of Standards confirmed that the state’s expectation is that all schools will teach to and meet, at a minimum, the State’s BOE-approved curriculum standards.

Members’ inquiries of the tri-county school websites confirmed the presence of county BOE-approved standards that reflect the state’s standards (see Sources of Information).

Existing Guidance (click on hyperlink to view content standards and benchmarks)

FL DOE Social Studies Content Standards <https://cpalms.org/public/search/Standard#/SocialStudies>

Selected relevant strands:

[Grade: K](#)

[Strand SS.K.A: American History](#)

[Strand SS.K.C: Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 1](#)

[Strand SS.1.A: American History](#)

[Strand SS.1.C: Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 2](#)

[Strand **SS.2.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.2.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 3](#)

[Strand **SS.3.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.3.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 4](#)

[Strand **SS.4.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.4.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 5](#)

[Strand **SS.5.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.5.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 6](#)

[Strand **SS.6.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Strand **SS.6.W:** World History](#)

[Grade: 7](#)

[Strand **SS.7.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 8](#)

[Strand **SS.8.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.8.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Grade: 912](#)

[Strand **SS.912.A:** American History](#)

[Strand **SS.912.C:** Civics and Government](#)

[Strand **SS.912.W:** World History](#)

[Strand **SS.912.S:** Sociology](#)

Literacy Standards in the Content Areas

At the secondary level the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) include strands to support literacy in history/**social studies**, science, and technical subjects. These strands can be accessed above. Although not content area specific, speaking and listening standards are also included in all history/**social studies**, science, and technical subject courses.

In accordance with Florida Statute 1000.03, Governor DeSantis directed the implementation of a new civic literacy requirement for high school students. Section 1007.25(4), Florida Statutes requires all students who enter a Florida college/university to meet a Civics Literacy Requirement. As such, Miami-Dade County Public Schools conducted a pilot administration from April 20-24, 2020.

www.fldoe.org/civicliteracy

Resources and Organizations

Committee members represent a wide range of experience and expertise in education and government. Serving as assets to the process of inquiry were members' interest and willingness to investigate and process what was collectively known and learned.

The Education Commission of the United States (ecs.org) which provides a matrix of requirements including a civics strand, *Citizenship Education Policies: State Profiles*, and a 50-state comparison of, among many other content areas, civics education. The requirements of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), include civics as part of a well-rounded education, and Florida's civics education requirements, standards and curriculum guidance meet all ESSA requirements.

Notable Resources:

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) announced (March 22, 2021) the formation of a coalition to promote authentic civic education. www.nas.org

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship www.floridacitizen.org promotes Florida Standards and the Florida EOC aligned instructional support materials for middle school civics

Florida Council for Social Studies www.fcass.org and National Council for Social Studies www.ncss.org offer numerous resources for civics education and civics educators

Civics 360 <https://civics360.org> is a Comprehensive (web-based) Guide to Middle School Civics, listed as a national model, recommended and widely-implemented resource

CARES Act K-12 Civic Literacy Booklist Prioritization Chart* www.dcps.duvalschools.org (printable list from the CARES Act resources)

*Florida Department of Education awarded Lake County schools a grant. The Social Studies group in the Curriculum and Instruction department for Lake County Public Schools will spend the money on books relevant to Civics Education on the above list. (High Quality Curriculum for Reading and Civics: CARES Act Literary Focus grants www.fldoe.org)

School Programs Conducted by Florida Supervisor of Elections www.myfloridaelections.com

Sources of Information

Florida Department of Education

At least one member attends Lake County BOE workshops.

[Civics End-of-Course Assessment \(2012\)](#) (link to document)

Board of Education websites of Lake <https://lake.k12.fl.us> , Marion <https://marion.k12.fl.us> and Sumter <https://sumter.k12.fl.us> counties

Websites of Florida state senate <https://flsenate.gov> and legislature <https://leg.state.fl.us.gov>

Legislative Activity

Two major bills affecting civics education have unanimously passed the Florida legislature and are expected to be signed by the governor, HB 146 and HB 5.

HB 146 summary: Civic Education; Requiring the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a nonpartisan civic literacy practicum for high school students, beginning with a specified school year; authorizing students to apply the hours they devote to practicum activities to certain community service requirements; requiring school districts accept nonpartisan civic literacy practicum activities and hours in requirements for certain awards; requiring the State Board of Education to designate certain high schools as Freedom Schools, etc.

Effective Date: 7/1/2021

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/146>

HB 5 summary: Revises the social studies credit requirement for high school graduation. Requires that the U.S. Government course include a comparative discussion of political ideologies that conflict with the principles of freedom and democracy in the nation's founding principles. The bill also requires the Florida Department of Education to curate oral history resources for use alongside the civics education curriculum.

Linked below is the Florida House staff analysis of HB5, which is the Speaker's civic education bill. Below that is a link to the Governor's proposal to bolster civic education by using over \$100 million in federal funding from the recently enacted COVID relief bill. Details:

The actual bill is after the analysis and is only three pages long. Underlined text is an addition to current law. The bill would be effective July 1, 2021.

The nonpartisan House staff analysis puts the legislation in the context of current law. It also covers administrative actions, including the State Board's plan to adopt new curriculum standards this summer.

It appears that the bipartisan support reflects the balanced approach of the bill.

The House website does not show any filings or appearances by the League in support or opposition to the bill; it is assumed that the League would be in support. The only appearances and filings have been in support, from the Florida Eagle Forum (Phyllis Schafly's group) and a group called Victims of Communism, along with a few individuals.

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=Committees&CommitteeId=3105&Session=2021&DocumentType=Meeting%20Packets&FileName=eec%203-17-21.pdf>

Governor's Initiative:

The Governor is asking the Legislature for budget approval to spend \$106 million in new federal COVID funding to improve civic education. The pricey part of his initiative is to pay \$3,000 to every teacher who completes civic education training.

His initiative obviously is not COVID-related, but the federal legislation seems broad and extends far beyond COVID relief. As of 4/27/2021, it appears the Florida legislature is on track to pay \$1,000 bonuses to all teachers and principals, with no special bonuses for civics education training.

<https://www.flgov.com/2021/03/17/governor-ron-desantis-announces-the-civic-literacy-excellence-initiative/>

Discussion

The committee discussed whether to investigate status of implementation, that is, the extent or degree to which the state content standards are implemented. The group concurred that this is beyond the scope of our survey at this stage.

Summary

The committee sought answers to the question of what the state says must be taught, and what is the accountability for determining acquisition of student outcomes. The FL DOE has historically developed and provided curriculum guidance for civics education, which is included in the social studies content standards. This guidance is readily accessible as previously stated. Social studies, and thus civics, is included in a curriculum management schedule and is updated regularly employing comprehensive curriculum methodology. The Florida State Board of Education accredited high school diploma requires that the student earns a minimum of 24 credits; included in the 24 credit requirement are related credits – US History (1 cr.), World History (1 cr.), US Government (1/2 cr.), Economics (1/2 cr.) all of which are topical strands within the social studies content area, and all of which have embedded civics-related content. Civics literacy is one of three standardized end-of-course assessments (biology and history are the other two).

Second, the committee pursued the question of whether the curriculum guidance includes student outcomes that address how government works. The situation of civics within social studies, which also encompasses U.S. History, World History, U.S. Government and Economics, is shown to allow for overall interdisciplinary content that addresses how the government of the United States works in particular as well as comparatively with other governments.

Finally, the question was explored as to whether the curriculum addresses how to be a responsible voter. The broad interdisciplinary approach to social studies allows numerous aspects of voter responsibility to be addressed.

The committee concluded that, overall, state curriculum guidance for civics education seems “pretty good.” The FL DOE Director of Standards expressed that the state’s expectation is that the schools will meet the standards, and committee research found satisfactory indications that the schools in the Tri-

County area all have BOE-approved content standards that meet or exceed state standards. One member was heard to remark, "Shouldn't we try to get them to move from *pretty good* to *great*?"

Recommendations

The committee would like to recommend the development of a "Be a Voter" presentation, highlighting the importance of voting, to be offered to area high school civics classes.

It has been noted that an LWV member, Carol Van Noy, has developed an experiential program that promotes skills and experiences, which align with LWV goals and principles, that reinforce the importance of being an informed voter. The committee suggests approaching Carol about the possibility of offering the program to schools. *School Programs Conducted by Florida Supervisor of Elections* www.myfloridaelections.com is a wide range of voter education programs; potential exists to reach out for collaborative opportunities.