

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1896

---

**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to the expansion of civics education in public schools.

**Brief Description:** Expanding civics education in public schools.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dolan, Stonier, Lovick, Springer, Appleton, Bergquist, Manweller, Tarleton, Frame, Goodman and Ormsby.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/14/17, 1/8/18, 1/11/18 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes an expanded civics education teacher training program (program) in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
- Establishes requirements for the program, including providing for the selection of a team of social studies teachers and civics educational specialists from across the state who will be tasked with developing teacher training materials and providing professional learning opportunities.
- Requires, beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each school district to offer a one-half credit stand-alone elective course in civics to all high school students in the district.
- Specifies that if the State Board of Education (SBE) increases the number of course credits in social studies that are required for high school graduation, the SBE must also require that at least one-half credit of that requirement be a stand-alone course in civics, and establishes additional and associated civics course content requirements.
- Directs the OSPI to select two school districts that are diverse in size and in geographic and demographic makeup to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Steele, Stokesbary, Valdez and Volz.

**Staff:** Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

### **Background:**

#### Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition to its constitutional charge of supervising all matter pertaining to public schools, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and its office has numerous and broad responsibilities prescribed in statute, including:

- making rules and regulations necessary for the administration of public education requirements;
- preparing courses of study and other materials and books for the discharge of education duties;
- fulfilling financial responsibilities, including distributing legislatively allocated funds to districts for the operation of the public school system, and awarding numerous state and federally funded grants;
- maintaining and revising, in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), a statewide academic assessment system to measure student knowledge and skills on state learning standards and for purposes of state and federal accountability; and
- satisfying numerous reporting and other duties assigned by the Legislature.

#### Civics Education and Basic Education.

Civics education provisions are included within requirements governing the state's program of basic education. Goal number two of the four statutorily established basic education goals of school districts obligate districts to provide opportunities for every student to develop the knowledge and skills essential to know and apply the core concepts and principles of civics and history, including different cultures and participation in representative government.

The SPI is responsible for developing the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) that identify the knowledge and skills all public school students need to know and be able to do based on the four basic education learning goals. For social studies topics, the requirements are adopted by the SPI as the K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards, standards that include specific EALRs and grade level expectations that describe what students should know and be able to do in civics, economics, geography, history and social study skills. School districts do not ratify or formally adopt the standards, as curriculum choices are, with limited exceptions, determined locally.

#### Civics Education—Graduation Prerequisites.

Graduation credit requirements established by the SBE for the graduating class of 2016 onward require students to complete three credits of social studies. The three social studies credits must include one credit of United States History, one credit of Contemporary World History, a Geography and Problems class (or an equivalent course), one-half credit of civics, and one-half credit for a social studies elective course.

Legislation adopted in 2009 (House Bill 2132, enacted as chapter 223, Laws of 2009), provides that if the SBE increases the number of course credits in social studies that are required for high school graduation, the SBE must also require that at least one-half credit of that requirement be coursework in civics. The content of the civics requirement must include but is not limited to:

- federal, state, and local government organization and procedures;
- rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington and United States Constitutions;
- current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda.

In addition to the social studies and civics requirements, the study of the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Washington are a graduation prerequisite for public and private high schools in the state.

---

### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

#### Expanded Civics Education Teacher Training Program.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, an expanded civics education teacher training program (program) is established within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The program must provide for the selection of a team of qualified social studies teachers, and when appropriate, civics education specialists, from across the state who will:

- develop teacher training materials using existing open educational resources that include civics information on national, state, tribal, and local government, and the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test required of persons seeking to become naturalized United States citizens;
- provide teacher training across the state using the tools established by the OSPI; and
- provide professional learning opportunities in accordance with specified provisions.

The program must assure an increase in the number of:

- teachers with the knowledge and skills to effectively engage students in civic education;
- students who have a basic understanding of how governments work; and
- students from every demographic and socioeconomic group who know their rights and responsibilities within society and are prepared to exercise them.

The OSPI is authorized to accept gifts and grants to assist with the establishment and implementation of the program.

#### Requirement for Stand-Alone Civics Course.

Beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each school district must offer a one-half credit stand-alone course in civics as an elective course to all high school students in the district. Although civics content and instruction may be embedded in other social studies courses offered to high school students, those courses do not satisfy this new requirement.

### Modifications to Civics Requirements.

Modifications are made to civics requirements for students. If the SBE increases the number of course credits in social studies that are required for high school graduation, the SBE must require that at least one-half credit of that requirement be a stand-alone course in civics. The content that the civics requirement must include is increased to also include: tribal government organization and procedures; the importance in a free society of living certain basic values and character traits; and the study and completion of the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test required of persons seeking to become naturalized United States citizens. Nothing in the provisions requiring the study and completion of the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test obligates students to obtain a passing score on the test as requirement for high school graduation.

### Demonstration Sites for Enhanced Civics Education.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the OSPI must select two school districts that are diverse in size and in geographic and demographic makeup to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education. These demonstration sites must:

- implement and assess an in-depth civics education program that includes the six proven instructional practices for enhancing civic education in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) classrooms;
- collaborate with programs and agencies in the local community in order to expand after-school and summer civics education opportunities;
- monitor and report the level of penetration of civics education in school and out-of-school programs;
- ensure that underserved students including rural, low-income, immigrant, and refugee students are prioritized in the implementation of programs;
- develop evaluation standards and a procedure for endorsing civics education curriculum that can be recommended for use in other school districts and out-of-school programs; and
- provide an annual report on the demonstration sites by December 1 each year to the Governor and the committees of the Legislature with oversight over K-12 education.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- removes all provisions of the underlying bill;
- specifies that, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, an expanded civics education teacher training program is established within the OSPI;
- establishes requirements for the program, including providing for the selection of a team of qualified social studies teachers, and when appropriate, civics education specialists, from across the state who will be tasked with developing teacher training materials and providing professional learning opportunities according to specified provisions;
- requires, beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each school district to offer a one-half credit stand-alone course in civics as an elective course to all high school students in the district;

- specifies that if the SBE increases the number of course credits in social studies that are required for high school graduation, the SBE must also require that at least one-half credit of that requirement be a stand-alone course in civics, and establishes additional associated civics course content requirements;
  - directs the OSPI, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, to select two school districts that are diverse in size and in geographic and demographic makeup to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education;
  - establishes requirements for the demonstration sites, including implementing and assessing an in-depth civics education program and providing an annual report by December 1 each year to the Governor and the committees of the Legislature with oversight over K-12 education;
  - removes appropriations and emergency clause provisions; and
  - includes intent language.
- 

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 8, 2018.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Last session the Legislature ran out of time to pass civics legislation, but it did consider two disparate bills, plus the OSPI was interested in related teacher training components. The proposed substitute bill is trying to get at what Thomas Jefferson wanted: a well-informed and active public. The proposed substitute bill was created by the OSPI and reflects the support and development of different stakeholder groups.

The legislation deserves support because it directly strengthens civics education. The bill provides excellent training for all social studies teachers in the state. Additionally, assuring that state, federal, and tribal government civics are taught together is critical. This legislation is the only one of its type.

It is amazing how little many people know about our system of government. Citizens should have a better understanding of how government works. The knowledge of civics among students is hit and miss. In order for democracy to flourish, citizens must be informed and participate in government. The bill should have a technical amendment to include references to tribal governments.

The bill should be supported, but it should also have technical updates as noted in a document provided to the committee. In addition to teachers, others are also qualified to teach civics. The Sunnyside and Franklin Pierce school districts have been selected as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education by a stakeholder group.

Apathy is the biggest problem in governance. This problem may be because civic education has fallen off during the last 30 years, but this bill will help.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Dolan, prime sponsor; Carol Coe, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Karen Fraser; Margaret Fisher, Council on Legal Public Education; Karen Verrill, League of Women Voters; Madeline Bishop; and Natalie Stevens, Olympia Indivisible.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.