

RCW 28A.230.094 High school civics course. (1)(a) Beginning with or before the 2020-21 school year, each school district that operates a high school must provide a mandatory one-half credit stand-alone course in civics for each high school student. Except as provided by (c) of this subsection, civics content and instruction embedded in other social studies courses do not satisfy the requirements of this subsection.

(b) Credit awarded to students who complete the civics course must be applied to course credit requirements in social studies that are required for high school graduation.

(c) Civics content and instruction required by this section may be embedded in social studies courses that offer students the opportunity to earn both high school and postsecondary credit.

(2) The content of the civics course must include, but is not limited to:

(a) Federal, state, tribal, and local government organization and procedures;

(b) Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington state and United States Constitutions;

(c) Current issues addressed at each level of government;

(d) Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda;

(e) The study and completion of the civics component of the federally administered naturalization test required of persons seeking to become naturalized United States citizens; and

(f) The importance in a free society of living the basic values and character traits specified in RCW 28A.150.211.

(3) By September 1, 2020, the office of the superintendent of public instruction, in collaboration with the Washington state association of county auditors and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization engaged in voter outreach and increasing voter participation, shall identify and make available civics materials and resources for use in courses under this section. The materials and resources must be posted on the office of the superintendent of public instruction's website. [2020 c 208 s 9; 2018 c 127 s 2.]

Short title—Findings—2020 c 208: See notes following RCW 29A.08.210.

Finding—Intent—2018 c 127: "The legislature finds that effective civics education teaches students how to be active, informed, and engaged citizens. The legislature recognizes that RCW 28A.150.210 identifies civics as one component of a basic education and that one-half credit in civics is required for high school graduation. The required civics content, however, may be embedded in another social studies course.

Civics requirements are meant to ensure that every student receives a high quality civics education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The legislature also recognizes, however, that two factors limit the effectiveness of civics education.

First, when the one-half civics credit is embedded in other courses rather than taught in a stand-alone civics course, the required content is easily diluted or ignored altogether. Pressure to emphasize other areas of the curriculum can relegate civics education to a lesser role.

Second, professional development opportunities for teachers in civics education are rare. In many districts, due to limited budgets and competing demands for funding, opportunities for teachers to deepen instructional and curricular practices in civics do not exist.

The legislature, therefore, intends to: Require school districts to provide a mandatory stand-alone civics course for all high school students; and support the development of an in-depth and interactive teacher professional development program to improve the ability of teachers throughout the state to provide students with an effective civics education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. This expanded civics education program seeks to ensure that students have basic knowledge about national, state, tribal, and local governments, and that they develop the skills and dispositions needed to become informed and engaged citizens." [2018 c 127 s 1.]