

**THE CIVICS ALLIANCE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS
MODEL CIVICS LEGISLATION**

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM ACT

Introduction

Most states make provision for social studies instruction, although a few delegate curriculum decisions entirely to the state Board of Education. Within the social studies curriculum, many states mandate specific courses of instruction, such as geography, economics, civics (American Government), United States History, and World History. We believe that the broad outline of the social studies curriculum now needs to be put into state law. The opponents of civics reforms frequently oppose a particular course mandate by claiming that it does not fit the entire social studies curriculum. We provide a model social studies curriculum to answer this critique—and to make sure that our recommendations do *not* overbalance the social studies curriculum as a whole.

Social Studies vs. History

K-12 schools ought to teach history rather than Social Studies—a “discipline” that traces back a century to the educational reforms inspired by John Dewey. “Social Studies” substitute geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and a host of other “studies” for the history of how Americans achieved their liberty, which is the most important thing our children can learn. We recognize, however, that civics education reform cannot immediately address this larger issue. Our reforms instead increase the amount of precisely mandated history and civics instruction within the larger category of social studies.

Elementary School (Grades 1-4)

Our model Social Studies Curriculum law mandates elementary-school instruction (grades 1-4) in history, civics, geography, the American flag, and the national anthem. We have not mandated discrete courses or further study of primary sources for this level of instruction. We believe that students should begin to learn civics and history in the earliest grades, but we have not mandated the precise means by which this should be done.

Middle School (Grades 5-8)

Our model Social Studies Curriculum law mandates middle-school instruction (grades 5-8) in history and civics, including a one-semester civics education course; a one-semester course in United States history; a one-semester course in the history of Western Civilization; a one-semester course in State History to be taught in grade 8; and a one-semester course in economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits, to be taught in grade 8.

The dedicated instruction in civics, United States history, and Western Civilization should provide a foundation for more advanced instruction in these topics in high school (grades 9-12).

The dedicated instruction in State History and economics in grade 8 should complement social studies instruction in high school.

State History

Existing state legislation varies between not mentioning state history, mandating that state history be a component of social studies instruction, and mandating stand-alone courses in state history, sometimes as a course taught in high school. 23 states have passed laws mandating state history instruction in some form.

We believe that students ought to learn the history of their state and that it ought to be taught as a discrete course. We are also mindful, however, that we should not suggest endless education mandates, and that we have already suggested mandating three years of instruction in the high school level, in Western Civilization History, United States History, and Civics Education (American Government). We believe students should learn State History, we believe it should be taught at as advanced a level as possible, but we do not wish to mandate its instruction in high school.

Our model Social Studies Curriculum therefore includes a mandate for a one-semester State History course to be taught in grade 8. We believe this would provide students with substantial instruction in State History, while avoiding too many mandates for high school instruction.

We commend states that already have mandated a year-long State History course and/or a high school State History course. Our model bill is a floor, not a ceiling, and should not be taken as censuring them.

We believe that State History ought to be taught in the same spirit as United States History and suggest that our model bill for United States History might be used also as a model for a State History bill. We have not, however, provided detailed model legislation for a State History course. Each state legislature should craft legislation appropriate for its own state's history.

Free Enterprise

Several states mandate that social studies curricula include instruction in the free enterprise system, sometimes as a discrete course. A great many more states include a broader mandate to teach economics.

As with State History, we are mindful that we have already suggested mandating three years of instruction in the high school level, in Western Civilization History, United States History, and Civics Education (American Government), and therefore we do not also include a high school mandate to study economics or free mandate.

Our model Social Studies Curriculum therefore includes a mandate for a one-semester course in economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits, to be taught in grade 8. We believe this would provide students with substantial instruction in economics and free enterprise, while avoiding too many mandates for high school instruction.

We commend states that have mandated more intensive and/or high-school level economics instruction, especially those that have framed that mandate to require instruction in the benefits of free enterprise. Our model bill is a floor, not a ceiling, and should not be taken as censuring them.

High School (Grades 9-12)

Civics, United States History, and Western Civilization

Our model Social Studies Curriculum law's heart is mandated one-year high school courses in Civics, United States History, and Western Civilization. Each of these will be described in detail in later chapters of model civics legislation.

Existing state legislation often mandates instruction in either "Civics" or "American Government." Our mandated Civics course corresponds to instruction under either name.

Existing state legislation usually mandates instruction in United States History. This mandate will have the least effect on the broader Social Studies Curriculum

Our mandate for a one-year course in Western Civilization replaces many existing state laws calling for instruction in World History. We will discuss the rationale for this change at greater length in the Western Civilization model legislation. In short, students need to learn an extended, coherent account of Western Civilization, from Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome to the present, to understand the nature of our ideals and institutions of liberty, how they came into existence, and what actions our forefathers took to preserve them. Extended instruction in the history of Western Civilization is an essential component of civics instruction.

Our model Social Studies Curriculum law directs all these classes to include substantial primary source instruction. Civics instruction ought to include primary sources—and the more students

read primary sources, the less activist educators can mislead them by providing false descriptions of those original writings.

Bible Literacy

Several states allow for nondenominational instruction in Bible Literacy. We provide model legislation in a later chapter of model civics legislation for an elective course in the subject.

World History

We do not mandate World History, or other courses that are currently part of high school social studies curricula. Neither do we forbid them—and because we have only mandated three years of social studies instruction, schools are still free to include a semester or a year of World History instruction. We would recommend that any such course focus on the history and culture of China and India, since these are the two rising powers of the world. Americans, once they have learned their own history and culture, would benefit from learning about the history and culture of these two great countries.

Graduation

Our model Social Studies Curriculum law requires students to *pass* their one-year high school courses in Civics, United States History, and Western Civilization, as a condition of receiving high school diplomas.

Assessment

We do not mandate external assessment of students as a condition of graduation, save for the Civics Literacy Assessment mentioned in a later chapter of our model civics legislation.

External assessment is a valuable means of checking to see whether schools actually have taught what they are required to do by state law.

External assessment also provides a powerful tool to state education bureaucrats, who might craft an external assessment that subverts legislative intent.

We therefore do not think we should include model legislation either requiring or prohibiting external assessment. Policymakers in each state should consider external assessment, but only if they are confident that they can craft a law that will not be abused by state education bureaucrats.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

Many states have adopted the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*. California and Maryland have done so by state statute. (See **Existing States Statutes** below.) The *C3 Framework* incorporates action civics into its basic structure:

D4.8.9-12. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts (*C3 Framework*, p. 62).

We therefore include an explicit ban on incorporating the *C3 Framework* into any public Social Studies State Standards, curricula, trainings, or other material.

Model Legislative Text

SECTION A:

- (1) The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall require all students in grades 1-4 to take a program of instruction each year in social studies.
- (2) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the workings of the federal, state, and local levels of government.
- (3) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include the rights and responsibilities of citizens of our constitutional republic and of the State of [name].
- (4) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history of the secular and religious ideals and institutions of liberty, including political, religious, economic, social, and cultural liberty, in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name], which emphasizes the good, worthwhile and best achievements of these ideals and institutions of liberty.
- (5) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of exemplary figures in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name] who have fought to secure liberty for their fellow men.
- (6) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the cultural heritage of Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name].
- (7) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the geography of the United States of America and the State of [name].
- (8) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history and meaning of the American flag and the national anthem.

SECTION B:

(1) The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall require all students in grades 5-8 to take a program of instruction each year in social studies.

(2) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include a one-semester civics education course; a one-semester course in United States history; a one-semester course in the history of Western Civilization; a one-semester course in [name of state] history to be taught in grade 8; and a one-semester course in economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits, to be taught in grade 8.

(3) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the workings of the federal, state, and local levels of government.

(4) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include the rights and responsibilities of citizens of our constitutional republic and of the State of [name].

(5) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history of the secular and religious ideals and institutions of liberty, including political, religious, economic, social, and cultural liberty, in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name], which emphasizes the good, worthwhile and best achievements of these ideals and institutions of liberty, and which uses writings from prominent figures in Western civilization, such as Aristotle, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson.

(6) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of exemplary figures in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name] who have fought to secure liberty for their fellow men, such as Epaminondas, Martin Luther, and George Washington.

(7) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the cultural heritage of Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name], and which uses writings from prominent figures in Western civilization, such as Homer, William Shakespeare, and Benjamin Franklin.

(8) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history and meaning of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, and the constitution and laws of this state.

SECTION C:

(1) The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall require all students in grades 9-12 to take a program of instruction each year in social studies.

(2) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include a one-year civics education course; a one-year course in United States history; and a one-year course in the history of Western Civilization.

(3) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the workings of the federal, state, and local levels of government.

(4) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include the rights and responsibilities of citizens of our constitutional republic and of the State of [name].

(5) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history of the secular and religious ideals and institutions of liberty, including political, religious, economic, social, and cultural liberty, in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name], which emphasizes the good, worthwhile and best achievements of these ideals and institutions of liberty, and which uses writings from prominent figures in Western civilization, such as Aristotle, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson.

(6) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of exemplary figures in Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name] who have fought to secure liberty for their fellow men, such as Epaminondas, Martin Luther, and George Washington.

(7) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the cultural heritage of Western Civilization, the United States of America, and the State of [name], and which uses writings from prominent figures in Western civilization, such as Homer, William Shakespeare, and Benjamin Franklin.

(8) The instruction listed in subsection (1) shall include knowledge of the history and meaning of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, and the constitution and laws of this state.

SECTION D:

The governing body of any school district or public charter school shall require all students who receive a high school diploma to have received a passing grade in grades 9-12 in a one-year civics education course; a one-year course in United States history; and a one-year course in the history of Western Civilization.

SECTION E:

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework may not be used, drawn upon, or in any way incorporated, by any administrator, faculty member, or other public employee, into any state standards, frameworks, trainings, curricula, lesson plans, or other material.

SECTION F:

If any provision of this chapter, or the application of any provision to any person or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this chapter and the application of its provisions to any other person or circumstance shall not be affected thereby.

Existing State Statutes

Social Studies Curriculum

Alabama: [Alabama Code Title 16. Education § 16-6B-2](#) [*High School Curriculum Requirements*]

Alaska: [AS 14.07.020](#) [*Duties of the Department [of Education and Early Development]*]

Arizona: [A.R.S. § 15-701](#) [*Common school; promotions; requirements; certificate; supervision of eighth grades by superintendent of high school district; high school admissions; academic credit; definition*]; [A.R.S. § 15-802](#) [*School instruction; exceptions; violations; classification; definitions*]

Arkansas: [A.C.A. § 6-15-1003](#) [*Academically competent students*]

California: [Cal Ed Code Div. 2 Part 20 Chap. 4 § 33540](#) [*Instructional Quality Commission [33530 – 33546]*]; [Cal Ed Code Div. 4 Part 28, Chap. 2 § 51210](#) [*Course of Study, Grades 1 to 6 [51210 – 51212]*]; [Cal Ed Code Div. 4 Part 28, Chap. 2 § 51220](#) [*Courses of Study, Grades 7 to 12 [51220 – 51230]*]; [Cal Ed Code Div. 4 Part 28, Chap. 2 § 51225.3](#) [*Courses of Study, Grades 7 to 12 [51220 – 51230]*]

Colorado: [C.R.S. 22-1-104](#) [*Teaching of history, culture, and civil government*]; [C.R.S. 22-33-104.5](#) [*Home-based education—legislative declaration—definitions—guidelines*]

Connecticut: [CT Gen Stat § 10-16b](#) [*Prescribed courses of study*]

District of Columbia: [Rule 5-A2203.3](#) [*Academic Requirements*]

Florida: [Fla. Stat. § 1003.41](#) [*Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*]; [Fla. Stat. § 1003.4156](#) [*General requirements for middle grades promotion*]; [Fla. Stat. § 1003.42](#) [*Required instruction*]; [Fla. Stat. § 1003.4282](#) [*Requirements for a standard high school diploma*]

Hawaii: [HRS §302A-321](#) [*Standards-based curriculum*]

Illinois: [105 ILCS 5/27-22](#) [*Required high school courses*]

Iowa: [Iowa Code § 256.7](#) [*Duties of state board*]; [Iowa Code § 256.11](#) [*Educational standards*]

Louisiana: [La. R.S. 17:24.4](#) [*Louisiana Competency-Based Education Program; statewide standards for required subjects; Louisiana Educational Assessment Program; parish or city school board comprehensive pupil progression plans; waivers*]

Maine: [M.R.S. Title 20-A §4711](#) [*Elementary course of study*]; [M.R.S. Title 20-A §4712](#) [*Junior high school or middle school course of study*]; [M.R.S. Title 20-A §4721](#) [*General requirement*]; [M.R.S. Title 20-A §4722](#) [*High school diploma standards*]; [M.R.S. Title 20-A §6209](#) [*System of learning results established*]

Maryland: [Md. Code Regs. 13A.03.02.03](#) [*Enrollment and Credit Requirements*]; [Md. Code Regs. 13A.04.08.01](#) [*Requirements for Social Studies Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12*]

Massachusetts: [Ma. Gen. Laws, Ch.69, §1D](#) [*Statewide educational goals; academic standards; vocational training; grant program*]; [Ma. Gen. Laws, Ch. 71, §2](#) [*Teaching of history and social science; professional development; student-led civic projects; commonwealth civics challenge*]

Michigan: [MCL 380.1168](#) [*Social studies curriculum; inclusion of age- and grade-appropriate instruction about genocide; governor’s council on genocide and Holocaust education; creation; members; appointment; vacancy; removal; meetings; election of chairperson and other officers; quorum; conduct of business at public meeting; writing subject to freedom of information act; expenses; use of state funds; duties; advisory body; definitions.*]; [MCL 380.1278](#) [*Core academic curriculum*]; [MCL 380.1278a](#) [*Requirements for high school diploma*]; [MCL 380.1278b](#) [*Award of high school diploma; credit requirements; personal curriculum; annual report*]; [MCL 380.1279g](#) [*Michigan merit examination; definitions*]

Minnesota: [Minn. Stat. § 120A.22](#) [*Compulsory instruction*]; [Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#) [*Required academic standards*]; [Minn. Stat. § 120B.30](#) [*Statewide testing and reporting system*]

Missouri: [RSMo 160.257](#) [*Pupil testing for competency in certain subjects — each school district to establish — department of elementary and secondary education, duties, limitations*]

Nebraska: [Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-701](#) [*Mission of public school system*]; [Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-760.01](#) [*Academic content standards; State Board of Education; duties*]

Nevada: [NV Rev Stat § 389.018](#) [*Designation of core academic subjects; minimum units of credit required in high school; exception; additional subjects to be taught. [Effective July 1, 2022.]*]; [NV Rev Stat § 389.520](#) [*Establishment of standards; periodic review of standards; adoption of standards by State Board; establishment of policy for ethical, safe and secure use of computers*]

New Mexico: [NMSA §22-13-1](#) [*Subject areas; minimum instructional areas required; accreditation*]; [NMSA §22-13-1.1](#) [*Graduation requirements*]

North Carolina: [N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-12](#) [*Powers and duties of the Board generally*]; [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C.81.5](#) [*Standard course of study*]

North Dakota: [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-01](#) [*Elementary and middle schools – Required instruction*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-02](#) [*High schools – Required units*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-02.2](#) [*High school graduation – Minimum requirements*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-25](#) [*High school graduation – Minimum requirements*]

Ohio: [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3313.603](#) [*Requirements for high school graduation; workforce or college preparatory units*]

Pennsylvania: [24 P.S. § 16-1605](#) [*Courses of study*]; [24 P.S. § 16-1613](#) [*High school certificates*]

Texas: [Texas Education Code §4.002](#) [*Public Education Academic Goals*]; [Texas Education Code §28.002](#) [*Required Curriculum*]

Utah: [Utah Code Ann. § 53E-4-202](#) [*Core standards for Utah public schools*]

Virginia: [Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-200.2](#) [*Minimum instructional time; optional unstructured recreational time*]

Washington: [Rev. Code Wash. § 28A.230.095](#) [*Essential academic learning requirements and assessments—Verification reports*]

Wisconsin: [Wi. Stat. sec. 118.33](#) [*High school graduation standards; criteria for promotion*]

Wyoming: [Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 21-9-101](#) [*Educational programs for schools; standards; core of knowledge and skills; special needs programs; class size requirements; cocurricular activities*]

State History

Arizona: [A.R.S. § 15-710](#) [*Instruction in state and federal constitutions, American institutions and history of Arizona*]

Arkansas: [ACA § 6-16-124](#) [*Arkansas history--Required social studies course*]

Florida: [Fla. Stat. § 1003.42](#) [*Required instruction*]

Georgia: [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-142](#) [*Prescribed courses*]

Indiana: [IC 20-30-5-22](#) [*Elective course on Indiana studies*]

Kansas: [K.S.A. 72-3214](#) [*Required subjects in elementary schools*]; [K.S.A. 72-3235](#) [*Kansas history and government, required course; duties of state board*]

Maine: [M.R.S. Title 20-A §4706](#) [*Instruction in American history, Maine studies and Maine Native American history*]

Nevada: [NV Rev Stat § 389.057](#) [*Instruction in American history; exception*]

New Hampshire: [NH RSA §189:11](#) [*Instruction in National and State History and Government*]

New Jersey: [N.J. Stat. § 18A:35-1](#) [*2-year course of study in history*]; [N.J. Stat. § 18A:35-2](#) [*Contents of course of study*]; [N.J. Stat. § 18A:35-3](#); [*Course in civics, geography and history of New Jersey*]

New Mexico: [NMSA §22-13-1](#) [*Subject areas; minimum instructional areas required; accreditation*]; [NMSA §22-13-1.1](#) [*Graduation requirements*]

North Carolina: [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C.81.40](#) [*North Carolina history and geography*]

North Dakota: [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-01](#) [*Elementary and middle schools - Required instruction*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-02](#) [*High schools - Required units*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-02.2](#) [*High school graduation - Minimum requirements*]; [N.D. Cent. Code § 15.1-21-25](#) [*High school graduation - Minimum requirements*]

Ohio: [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §3313.60](#) [*Prescribed curriculum*]

Oklahoma: [Okla. Stat. tit. 70, § 11-103](#) [*Courses for instruction - What to include*]; [Okla. Stat. tit. 70, § 11-103.6](#) [*State Board of Education - Adoption of subject matter standards - Option for high school graduation - Adoption and approval of promotional system*]

Pennsylvania: [24 P.S. § 13-1327.1](#) [*Home education program*]; [24 P.S. § 15-1511](#) [*Subjects of instruction; flag code*]; [P.S. § 16-1605](#) [*Courses of study*]

Tennessee: [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1015](#) [*Senator Douglas Henry Tennessee History Act*]

Texas: [Texas Education Code §28.002](#) [*Required Curriculum*]; [Texas Government Code, Title 4, Subtitle D, Chapter 451](#) [*Texas 1836 Project*]

Utah: [Utah Code Ann. § 53G-10-204](#) [*Civic and character education -- Definitions -- Legislative finding -- Elements -- Reporting requirements*]

Vermont: [Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 16 § 906](#) [*Course of study*]

Virginia: [Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-200](#) [*Subjects taught in elementary grades*]

West Virginia: [W. Va. Code § 18-2-9](#) [*Required course of instruction*]

Wisconsin: [Wi. Stat. § 118.01](#) [*Educational goals and expectations*]

Free Enterprise

Delaware: [14 DE Code § 4103](#) [*Teaching Constitution of the United States, Constitution and government of Delaware and the free enterprise system*]

Florida: [Fla. Stat. § 1003.42](#) [*Required instruction*]

Illinois: [105 ILCS 5/27-21](#) [*History of United States*]

Louisiana: [La. R.S. 17:274](#) [*Free enterprise; elective course*]; [La. R.S. 17:274.1](#) [*Civics and Free Enterprise; required; exceptions*]

North Carolina: [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C.81.45](#) [*Classes conducted in English; citizenship; and civic literacy*]

Tennessee: [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-1205](#) [*Free enterprise system*]

Texas: [Texas Education Code §28.002](#) [*Required Curriculum*]

Utah: [Utah Code Ann. § 53G-10-204](#) [*Civic and character education -- Definitions -- Legislative finding -- Elements -- Reporting requirements*]

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

California: [Cal Ed Code Div. 2 Part 20 Chap. 4 § 33540](#) [*Instructional Quality Commission [33530 - 33546]*]

Maryland: [Md. Code Regs. 13A.04.08.01](#) [*Requirements for Social Studies Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12*]