



**Kodiak Island Borough School District**

722 Mill Bay Road

Kodiak, AK 99615

Office of the Superintendent

(907) 481-6202

December 12, 2016

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair  
Alaska Legislative Task Force on Civics Education  
State Capitol Room 429  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Honorable Senator Gary Steven, Chair:

The Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) wishes to thank the Task Force of Civics Education for inviting the professional perspectives of Alaska educational leaders. The KIBSD School Board met Monday, December 12, 2016 to provide guidance for this letter. The KIBSD Board strongly supports local control of schools and graduation requirements. The Board opposes intrusion of federal and state erosion of local control of school. This letter presents in brief the KIBSD standards, curriculum, textbook, and opportunities to apply civics beyond the classroom. A brief statement will be offered regarding the implementation of a civics high school exit exam, as well as concerns about funding the expansion of another curricular mandate.

**KIBSD Civics Curriculum, Standards and Textbook**

The KIBSD Social Studies Curriculum offers one semester of civics education in 9<sup>th</sup> grade:

The School Board has adopted the Alaska State Content Standards for Government and Citizenship and the following curriculum was developed to address these standards in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Four key areas of study are:

1. Current Issues: Students summarize national and international current issues.
2. Foundations of the United States Government: Students understand the history and development of the US government.
  - Describe reasons why the United States declared Independence from Great Britain.

- Understand major ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence
- Analyze why the Articles of Confederation failed and describe how this led to the creation of the Constitution.

3. The Bill of Rights: Students will analyze the Bill of Rights and its importance in the development of our nation.

- Understand and classify rights included in the Bill of Rights.
- Analyze and debate issues related to the Bill of Rights.
- Evaluate the importance of individual rights included in the Bill of Rights.

4. The Three Branches of Government: Students identify and describe the branches of government and government processes.

- Understand the function of the Executive Branch of Government.
- Understand the function of the Legislative Branch of Government.
- Understand the function of the Judicial Branch of Government.
- Describe and analyze the separation of power between the three branches of Government.
- Describe the Presidential Election process.

Adopted Textbook- Civics in Practice: Principles of Government and Economics

Massing, G. I. (2009). *Civics in practice: Principles of government and economics*. Orlando, FL: Holt McDougal, a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

### **Additional Opportunities For Applying Civics Education**

**Student Government-** All KIBSD schools supports civics instruction through student governments in elementary schools through high school.

**The KIBSD School Board's Student Leadership Program-** This is a unique program that selects elementary students to act as Pages at school board meetings. Middle school students are selected to service as Sargent of Arms for board meetings. High school students serve as a school board representative and participate in high school student government.

**Youth Court-** This community-sponsored program is active in Kodiak is another opportunity for students to apply civics education beyond the classroom.

**AASB Sponsored Youth Leadership Training-** Students participate in multiple AASB trainings throughout the school year.

### **A Civics Exit Exam**

The state of Alaska previously eliminated the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) for many sound and responsible reasons. The idea of bringing back another high stakes exit exam will pose the same problems that occurred with the HSGQE. These issues include and are not limited to necessary accommodations and modifications essential to meeting various special population needs. The use of the material used for


the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has some merit. Each school system should have diverse methods for evaluating and meeting locally controlled graduation requirements.

### **Fully Fund New Mandates**

The pressures of educational time, materials and resources are immense. As budgets respond to fiscal pressures simply requiring additional content and material without providing the funds for curriculum development, professional development, and implementation will only cause a reduction of other current mandated content and services. Please consider the financial impact and volume of other required content already being implemented and do not create another unfunded mandate.

KIBSD does agree that a democratic republic must have an informed and educated citizenry. Civics education is both valued and honored by KIBSD. The effort to improve the quality of our education system is appreciated. Thank you for your work to serve Alaska's children.

Sincerely,



Stewart McDonald  
Superintendent