



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

Snapshot Civic Education Policy Snapshot

Updated March 25, 2025 | Lauren Gendill

Related Topic:

5 Things to Know About Civic Education

- Civics, also called civic education or civic learning, can broadly be defined as “the lifelong process that makes people into informed and engaged members of their communities—which range from schools and towns or neighborhoods to the whole nation and even the world,” according to [iCivics](#).
- Civic education in elementary and secondary schools can build students’ [knowledge, skills and dispositions to communicate ideas with others and contribute to their communities](#). [Research suggests](#) that individuals who learn about civics are more likely to vote and participate in civic activities.
- A [recent survey](#) found that 1 in 6 American adults cannot name any branch of government. Data from the [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) indicates that student performance in civics education decreased between 2018 and 2022, with average scores showing no significant difference from when the assessment was first administered in 1998.
- State legislative activity on K-12 civic education has [increased in recent years](#). Since 2023, at least 23 states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation related to the topic.
- Enacted legislation features various approaches to enhance K-12 civic education including but not limited to revising social studies standards, requiring civics courses and digital and media literacy instruction, creating conditions for assessments, establishing high school graduation requirements and recognition programs, providing for professional development for educators, allocating funding and forming commissions and task forces.

5 States That Enacted Civic Education Policies Within the Last 5 Years

- **Kentucky**

[HB 535 \(2024\)](#) requires high school students to successfully complete a one-half credit civic literacy course or a civics test to graduate. Relatedly, the bill prescribes civic literacy course components and establishes reporting measures.

- **Connecticut**

[HB 6762 \(2023\)](#) requires public schools to provide instruction on civics and media literacy. The bill also establishes the Civics Education, Civics Engagement and Media Literacy Task Force to study and develop strategies for civic engagement and instruction on civics, citizenship, media literacy and American government, including those for high school and college students.

[SB 154 \(2024\)](#) amends membership of the Civics Education, Civics Engagement and Media Literacy Task Force to include a high school student and a college student.

- **Indiana**

[HB 1384 \(2021\)](#) establishes the Civic Education Commission and requires the State Board of Education, in coordination with the Department of Education, to establish standards for civics education. The bill additionally requires students to successfully complete a one-semester civics education course in grade six, seven or eight.

[SB 211 \(2024\)](#) requires the Department of Education, in coordination with the Commission for Higher Education and subject to the approval of the State Board, to establish criteria for an excellence in civic engagement designation for high school students. The department is also required to develop recommendations for an excellence in civics education designation for schools.

- **New Hampshire**

[SB 216 \(2023\)](#) requires class time for civics in elementary school, a half-year civics course in middle school, and a half-year civics course and a one-year history and government course in high school. The legislation additionally clarifies existing civic assessment graduation requirements to apply to public, chartered public, non-public schools and privately incorporated schools serving as public schools.

- **Rhode Island**

[HB 5028 \(2021\)](#) requires middle and high school students to demonstrate proficiency in civics education as defined by their local school district. The bill also directs school districts to provide at least one student-led civics project during either middle or high school.