

Civics Education in the MSBSD

MSBSD School Board Update

Mike Vrvilo, Executive Director of Education

- 30 years ago Civics was 8th grade Social Studies curriculum
- In the late 1980's Civics was replaced by 8th grade U.S. Studies
 - 6th Grade: Western Hemisphere Geography
 - 7th Grade: Eastern Hemisphere Geography
 - 8th Grade: US Studies (pre-Colonial through Civil War)
- At roughly the same time, a 9th grade Social Studies requirement called Law Related Studies was added. At that time the 3 credit Social Studies requirement for graduation consisted of:
 - Law Related Studies (9th Grade) .5 credit
 - World History (10th Grade) 1 credit
 - 11th grade--U.S. History 1 credit
 - 12th grade--U.S. Government .5 credit
 - Total 3 credits
- In 2004 the State Legislature passed a law that required the teaching of Alaska History as part of the 3 credit Social Studies requirement, beginning with the class of 2009
- A group of Mat-Su Social Studies educators began to meet to discuss ways of making this new requirement happen. The original proposal was an increase in the Social Studies credit requirement to 4 credits consisting of:
 - World History 1 credit
 - U.S. History 1 credit
 - Alaska History .5 credit
 - U.S. Government .5 credit
 - Approved elective 1 credit
 - Total 4 credits
- This proposal was initially accepted by the district and the School Board, but when the budgetary impact of adding more sections and thus more teachers was realized, the Board rescinded the new 4 credit requirement. In doing so, it became apparent that we would have to replace Law Related Studies with Alaska History.
- There were then some suggestions to rename Law Related Studies to Civics. This also proved problematic as a standard Civics class is much broader than Law Related Studies. One definition of a Civics class is the “study of the workings of the national and local government especially as the subject of a secondary school course suited as training for citizenship.” While there are some elements of civic education in Law Related Studies, simply changing to name to Civics would have been misleading.

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- In 2007 a discussion among some social study teachers regarding Civics took place which prompted an investigation into what defines “Civics”. From those discussions a teacher brought Civics as a class forward to the curriculum council. The council approved and made the recommendation to the school board for the course to be approved. The school board approved the course shortly after in 2007.
- Currently there are no sections of Civics being taught in the Mat-Su School District.
- However, elements of Civics are embedded in 8th grade US Studies, 11th grade US History, Government (12th grade)
- Currently we still have 3 graduation requirements for social studies. They consist of:
 - World History (Grade 10) 1 credit
 - US History (Grade 11) 1 credit
 - Government (Grade 12) .5 credit
 - Alaska History (Grade 12) .5 credit
 - Total 3 credits