
From: Susan A
Sent: Tuesday, May 07, 2024 12:00 PM
To: House Finance; Sen. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: SB 29

I find SB 29 a work in progress and have a few suggestions. So take what you wish, but I find this bill incomplete as written, but would love to see it implemented correctly.

Alaska could construct a proposed solution for its current Senate Bill 29 (SB 29) based on Colorado's successful approach to civics education:

Statewide Civics Requirement:

Like Colorado, Alaska could implement a statewide graduation requirement for civics education. High schools would be required to offer a dedicated civics and government course.

The curriculum should cover essential topics such as the origins of democracy, the structure of American government, methods of public participation, a comparison to foreign governments, and the responsibilities of citizenship¹.

Teacher Training and Curriculum Development:

Alaska should invest in teacher training to ensure educators are well-prepared to teach civics effectively.

Collaborate with curriculum specialists to develop age-appropriate materials that align with state standards and learning objectives.

Integration into Existing Courses:

Integrate civics education into existing courses such as social studies, history, or government classes.

Teachers can incorporate civics content into their lesson plans, activities, and assessments.

Assessment and Accountability:

Administer civics assessments to evaluate students' understanding of civic concepts.

Use assessment results to track student progress and identify areas for improvement.

Community Engagement:

Collaborate with local organizations, government agencies, and community leaders to enhance civics education.

Arrange guest speakers, field trips, and community service projects related to civic engagement.

Incorporating Current Events:

Use current events as teaching opportunities. Discuss real-world issues, elections, and policy decisions.

Analyze news articles, court cases, and legislative debates to foster critical thinking.

Interactive Learning:

Organize mock elections, debates, and simulations to engage students actively.

Encourage student participation in student government, community service, and volunteering.

Parent and Family Involvement:

Communicate with parents about the importance of civics education.

Involve families through discussions, homework assignments, and family events related to civics.

Resources and Materials:

Acquire or create educational resources such as textbooks, videos, online platforms, and interactive tools.

Ensure access to reliable information and diverse perspectives.

Assessment of Impact:

Periodically assess the impact of civics education initiatives.

Use surveys, student feedback, and academic performance data to inform adjustments and improvements.

Addressing challenges specific to Alaska's context in implementing civics education requires a tailored approach. Here are some considerations:

Rural and Remote Communities:

Alaska's vast geography poses challenges in reaching students in remote areas. To address this:

Online Resources: Develop online civics resources accessible to all students, including those in remote villages.

Mobile Units: Consider mobile civics education units that travel to remote communities, providing workshops and materials.

Cultural Diversity:

Alaska is home to diverse Indigenous cultures. To respect cultural differences:

Culturally Relevant Content: Develop civics materials that incorporate Indigenous perspectives and histories.

Community Involvement: Involve local Elders and community leaders in shaping the curriculum.

Language Barriers:

Alaska has over 20 Indigenous languages. To address language diversity:

Multilingual Materials: Create civics materials in multiple languages, including English and Indigenous languages.

Language Preservation: Promote language revitalization efforts alongside civics education.

Engaging Native Youth:

Empower Native youth to actively participate in civic life:

Youth Councils: Establish Native Youth Councils to discuss civic issues and propose solutions.

Traditional Practices: Integrate traditional practices (such as storytelling) into civics education.

Cultural Competency Training:

Educators need training to understand Alaska's unique context:

Cultural Competency Workshops: Provide workshops on understanding diverse cultures and historical trauma.

Local Context Awareness: Educators should learn about local history, land use, and community dynamics.

Inclusion of Alaska Native History:

This is HUGE

Incorporate Alaska Native history into civics education:

Land Claims Settlements: Teach about the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and its impact.

Sovereignty: Discuss tribal sovereignty and self-governance.

Outdoor Learning Opportunities:

Leverage Alaska's natural environment:

Field Trips: Organize field trips to historical sites, government buildings, and natural landmarks.

Environmental Stewardship: Connect civics to environmental issues relevant to Alaska.

Local Government Engagement:

Alaska's local governments play a significant role:

Guest Speakers: Invite local officials to schools for discussions.

Student Mock Government: Simulate local government processes.

Funding and Resources:

Allocate resources strategically:

Grant Programs: Establish grants for schools to enhance civics education.

Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate with businesses and nonprofits.

Teacher Retention and Recruitment:

Address teacher shortages:

Incentives: Offer incentives for teachers willing to work in rural areas.

Professional Development: Provide ongoing training for civics educators.

Remember that Alaska's unique context requires flexibility and collaboration. By involving communities, respecting cultural diversity, and adapting to local needs, Alaska can create a robust civics education system.

We must be ensured this is a non-partisan civics class. I would have loved to attend a class like this in Alaska.

Susan Allmeroth

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