

Social Studies in Washington

Background information on Washington State
History and Government Requirements

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The Law

RCW 28A.230.093

If, after July 26, 2009, the state board of education increases the number of course credits in social studies that are required for high school graduation under RCW [28A.230.090](#), the board shall also require that at least one-half credit of that requirement be coursework in civics.



What content would be included

The law requires that the course include

- (a) Federal, state, and local government organization and procedures;
- (b) Rights and responsibilities of citizens addressed in the Washington state and United States Constitutions;
- (c) Current issues addressed at each level of government; and
- (d) Electoral issues, including elections, ballot measures, initiatives, and referenda.

Where is Civics currently located?

Civics content is present in a variety of courses, but most commonly through:

- Washington State History and Government (4th and 7th grade)
- United States History and Government (5th, 8th, and 11th)
- Contemporary World Problems (12th grade)

Typically, high school US History and Government consists of 1 quarter (or less) of civics, mainly focused on national government.

Civics Assessments are required by law

Districts must administer a *Civics* Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) at the following grades:

- 4th or 5th
- 7th or 8th
- 11th or 12th

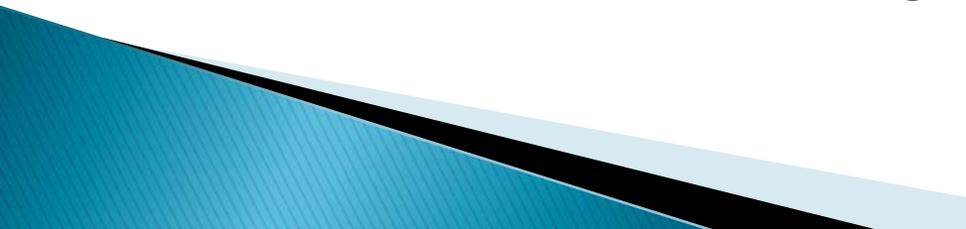
Assessments are typically administered in US History courses



Is a Civics Course Necessary?

- ▶ “A requirement needs to be in place for a .5 of civics otherwise it is a add on instead of a focus.”

Eric Roal
Teacher

- ▶ In a statewide public opinion poll conducted in 2006, barely one-half of the registered voters surveyed understood what “separation of powers” means.
 - ▶ The 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress on Civics showed that less than 25% of students in the sample could demonstrate a proficient understanding of civics.
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Justice O'Connor Appeared on the Daily Show in 2009

O'Connor: Only one-third of Americans can even name the three branches of government, much less say what they do.

Stewart: That's not good. I thought you were going to say only one-third can name the Supreme Court justices Can they name, let's say, an American Idol judge?

O'Connor: Yes, 75 percent can name at least one American Idol judge.

- ▶ Creating a stand alone civics course would allow US History to become a full year course
 - “This is a fantastic opportunity to finally even out that awkward situation with US history.” *Marcy James, Teacher*
 - “Teachers would still cover the basics in those classes but with a stand alone course on Civics, students could go the "mile deep" not just the "mile wide.” *Eric Roal, Teacher*

 - ▶ However, some educators are concerned by the proposed shift:
 - “When we continue to separate “parts” of social studies into separate courses we do the students a disservice in compartmentalizing rather than teaching them the contextual inherency of all parts of social studies in historical events (civics, geography, history, and economics).” *Tom Christian, Grant Director*
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Who will this affect?

- ▶ Districts will need to create an additional course if they do not already have a stand alone civics course.
 - ▶ Districts will need clarity on where the course should be placed
 - Currently the GLEs focus at the 11th and 12th grade level
 - 11th and 12th grade already have a recommended 2.0 credit requirement
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“With the state of the world and what citizens need to know about how our experiment in democratic governance works, it is critical that we re-visit the civic mission of the schools in order to foster the knowledge, skills and values that lead to more informed and critical thinking civic participants.”

Paula Fraser
Former Teacher
Bellevue School District





Washington State History

Current requirement

WAC 180-51-066 (SBE) requires students to earn 2.5 credits in Social Studies for graduation:

- ❖ .5 Washington State History and Government
- ❖ 1.0 US History and Government
- ❖ 1.0 Contemporary World Problems

WAC 392-410-120 (OSPI) requires a one semester course (90, fifty minute, hours of instruction or its equivalent) in grades 7-12, combined, but not at each grade level.

- ❖ WA State History and Government is also required in grades 1-6

Washington State History Content

Must include:

- ▶ the study of the Constitution of the state of Washington

Encouraged to include

- ▶ information on the culture, history, and government of the American Indian people who were the first inhabitants of the state.

Problems with current set up

WAC 180-51-066 defines the term "secondary student" as:

- a student who is in one of the grades seven through twelve.

However, to receive credit, the course must be taught to high school level standards

- OSPI recommends that Washington State History and Government be taught at 7th grade
- The Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) for this course are currently 7th grade GLEs

What is the current practice?

- ❑ Currently, districts are confused by the requirement
- ❑ Many districts are not issuing academic credit for this course
 - nearly 40% of 2008 graduates completed course in middle school,
 - half of which received a notation on transcripts rather than a .5 credit
- ❑ Many districts are only providing “make-up credit” at the high school level
- ❑ Those districts that are awarding credit at the high school level are referencing 7th grade level standards.

Proposed requirement

Make WA State History and Government a *non-credit requirement* which will be noted on student transcripts

This proposal will:

- ▶ Require that the course and content are still taught
- ▶ Alleviate the confusion about earning credit for a middle school level course
- ▶ Likely have little affect on districts
- ▶ Allow OSPI's recommendations and GLEs to remain consistent

Alternatives

If this course remains in its current form:

- ▶ OSPI will need to consider altering the GLEs in order to reach high school level rigor
 - ▶ Districts will need clear direction from OSPI and SBE regarding placement of this course
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Who will this affect?

▶ Districts

- Many districts would not be required to make changes to their current practice (including both curriculum and course placement)
- Districts would still have the flexibility to award academic credit if taught at a high school level



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Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum

“Since Time Immemorial” (STI) Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum (OSPI)

- ▶ Created in response to HB 1495 (2005) which encourages the teaching of tribal history
- ▶ Encourage teachers and students to address essential questions in the context of tribes in their own communities
- ▶ Recommends and integrated approach by provides three levels of curriculum for each of the OSPI recommended Social Studies units, each level building on the last.

STI Units

STI consists of 27 units:

- 7 in Elementary (4 WA St. and 3 US History)
- 10 in Middle School (5 WA St. and 5 US History)
- 10 in High School (6 US History and 4 CWP)

Directly aligned to state standards (GLEs) and OSPI recommended scope and sequence

Units often utilize OSPI Developed Social Studies Assessments

Affects of Proposed Social Studies Changes to the STI Curriculum

Removal of credit requirement for Washington State History and Government:

- Little to no affect as long as the course is still a requirement
- If moved to the high school level, this would require additional units to meet high school level standards

Addition of civics course:

- May require creation of additional units for the civics course
- Some pre-existing units for both US and CWP could also be used in Civics course
- May take time away from US and CWP, leaving less time for addition of STI curriculum



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