

Date of Hearing: June 12, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
SB 1094 (Limón) – As Introduced February 12, 2024

SENATE VOTE:

SUBJECT: Pupil instruction: course of study: social sciences: civic engagement

SUMMARY: Adds principles of democracy and the State and Federal Constitutions to the courses of study for grades 1 through 6 and 7 through 12, and requires students to complete a civic engagement or experience with a local, state, or national governmental institution at least once between grades 1 to 6 and again in either grade 7 or 8. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Adds principles of democracy and the State and Federal Constitutions to the courses of study for grades 1 through 6 and 7 through 12.
- 2) Requires students to complete a civic engagement or experience with a governmental institution at the local, state, or national level at least once in grades 1 to 6 and again in either grade 7 or 8, as determined by the governing board of the local educational agency (LEA).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the adopted course of study for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, to include instruction in social sciences, drawing upon anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, designed to fit the pupils' maturity. (Education Code (EC) 51210)
- 2) Establishes the adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to include social sciences, drawing upon the disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, designed to fit the maturity of the pupils. (EC 51220)
- 3) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), on or before January 1, 2020, to recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) criteria for awarding a State Seal of Civic Engagement to students who have demonstrated excellence in civics education and participation and have demonstrated an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government. (EC 51471)
- 4) Requires the SPI, in developing criteria for the State Seal of Civic Engagement, to incorporate the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning, and to consult with a diverse group of credentialed, current, classroom teachers who teach the subject of history-social science, including government, in secondary schools. Requires the SPI to also consider including criteria based on each of the following:
 - a) Successful completion of history, government, and civics courses, including courses that incorporate character education;
 - b) Voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities; and

- c) Any other related requirements it deems appropriate. (EC 51471)
- 5) Requires the SPI to ensure, to the greatest extent feasible, that the criteria:
- a) Provide all students with an opportunity to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement;
 - b) Recognize student excellence or outstanding achievement;
 - c) Are not based primarily on student achievement that is already recognized through grades or other standard measures of student achievement; and
 - d) To the extent possible, result in a seal that confers some benefit to students beyond secondary school. (EC 51471)
- 6) Prohibits a student from being charged to receive a State Seal of Civic Engagement. (EC 51474)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill could result in a reimbursable state mandate for local educational agencies (LEAs) to offer civic engagement opportunities for students. Actual costs will vary by LEA but statewide Proposition 98 General Fund costs could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. Ultimately, the bill's cost will depend on how LEAs elect to comply with the bill's provisions which are broad and allow for much discretion. For example, an LEA may require students to complete an essay in the classroom to satisfy the civic engagement requirement while another district may choose to offer a field trip to an off-campus location which would be more costly.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, "SB 1094 furthers existing law by creating pathways for students in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged at the local, state, and national levels of government. Civic education provides students with critical thinking and collaboration skills and empowers students with knowledge to become active participants in their communities and government. It is imperative to introduce them early to civic education and systems of government to create clear pathways towards a lifetime of civic engagement."

Civic education in History-Social Science Curriculum Framework. California's History-Social Science Framework, adopted by the SBE in July 2016, addresses civic engagement throughout the document.

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), the Framework includes more than thirty detailed classroom examples from a wide range of grade levels that show teachers how they can tailor instruction to address not only the history–social science standards, but also the English Language Arts (ELA)/English Language Development (ELD) standards. The classroom examples include a number with a civic focus, such as:

- Kindergarten: Being a Good Citizen
- Grade Three: Classroom Constitution
- Grade Five: The Preamble
- Grade Eight: The Civic Purpose of Public Education
- Grade Twelve: Judicial Review

In addition to the classroom examples, the CDE reports that there are many places in the Framework's course descriptions where there are suggestions for activities that engage students in civic learning. Some examples include:

- Studying key American symbols and heroes through grade-appropriate literature, songs, and images in kindergarten through 3rd grade;
- Simulations of government activities (e.g., a Congressional hearing debating the bill of rights in 5th grade, planning and participating in a mock election in 8th grade, or conducting mock trials of landmark Supreme Court cases in 11th grade);
- Suggestions for engaging in service-learning projects such as voter education and registration activities;
- Suggestions for inquiry-based projects that include student interviews of legislators and other public officials, civil rights activists, or members of the military; and
- Suggestions for ways that students can get involved in campaigns to address local issues at the school or community level (e.g., recycling, campus safety).

The 12th grade curriculum "Principles of American Democracy" section includes a focus on the questions, "What does it mean to be a citizen?" and "How can citizens improve democracy?" The course description states: "Students learn that democracies depend upon an actively engaged citizenry – individuals who fully participate in the responsibilities of citizenship (such as voting, serving in the military, or regular public service) – for their long-term survival."

This 12th grade course description also suggests the use of structured group discussion techniques, simulations, classroom debates, and civics-based serving learning activities, designed to provide students with concrete answers to the question. Other suggested activities include participating in classroom mock trials, visiting courtrooms, serving as poll workers, participating in voter registration, simulating or visit city council meetings, conducting projects to identify, analyzing and addressing a community problem, competing in civic-writing activities, and participating in service-learning.

The Framework also includes two appendices devoted to civic engagement and service-learning:

- Appendix D: Educating for Democracy: Civic Education in the History–Social Science Curriculum, which includes the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning; and
- Appendix H: Practicing Civic Engagement: Service Learning in the History-Social Science Framework, which provides definitions, examples, and reasons for encouraging service-learning in the curriculum.

State Seal of Civic Engagement. In addition to its inclusion in the curriculum, California has prioritized civic education through enactment of the State Seal of Civic Engagement, one of two diploma seals students may earn to recognize special achievement.

AB 24 (Eggman), Chapter 604, Statutes of 2017, required the SBE to establish five criteria for the awarding of the State Seal of Civic Engagement. The SBE established these five criteria in 2020.

The five criteria are meant to provide LEAs with a Framework for making determinations of student qualifications required to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement, based on their own

local contexts. The criteria were written to ensure that no student is excluded from an opportunity to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement based on academic ability, alternative school settings, or unique or unconventional expressions of civic engagement. The student must:

- 1) Be engaged in academic work in a productive way;
- 2) Demonstrate a competent understanding of the United States and California constitutions; the functions and governance of local governments; tribal government structures and organizations; the role of the citizen in a constitutional democracy; and democratic principles, concepts, and processes;
- 3) Participate in one or more informed civic engagement project(s) that address real-world problems and require students to identify and inquire into civic needs or problems, consider varied responses, take action, and reflect on efforts;
- 4) Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions through self-reflection; and
- 5) Exhibit character traits that reflect civic-mindedness and a commitment to positively impact the classroom, school, community and/or society.

State Seal of Civic Engagement issuance increasing steadily. Participation in this program has been small but growing. According to the CDE, in the 2020-21 school year, 103 schools participated in 28 LEAs, and 5,359 Seals were issued. In the 2021-22 school year, 181 schools participated in 65 LEAs, and 10,104 Seals were issued. And in the 2022-23 school year, 260 schools in 86 LEAs participated, and 12,559 Seals were issued.

Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning. Existing law required the SBE, in establishing criteria for the State Seal of Civic Engagement to incorporate the Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning, developed by the Education Commission of the States. These Six Practices are:

- 1) Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy;
- 2) Incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives;
- 3) Design and implement programs that provide students with opportunities to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction;
- 4) Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities;
- 5) Encourage student participation in school governance; and
- 6) Encourage students' participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.

California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning of 2014 (Task Force). In 2014, the Chief Justice of California and the SPI formed the Task Force with the goal of crafting a set of recommendations to improve civic learning in our schools to address the need to revitalize civic

learning in our state. To this end, the Task Force made the following system-wide recommendations to improve civic learning in California schools:

- 1) Revise the California History-Social Science Content Standards and accompanying curriculum frameworks to incorporate an emphasis on civic learning, starting in kindergarten, so all students acquire the civic knowledge, skills and values they need to succeed in college, career, and civic life.
- 2) Integrate civic learning into state assessment and accountability systems for students, schools, and districts. Civic knowledge, skills, values, and whether students are receiving learning opportunities that promote these outcomes must be assessed and linked to revised California History-Social Science Content Standards and relevant Common Core State Standards. This will enable periodic reporting to the Legislature and the public on the state of students' civic learning.
- 3) Improve professional learning experiences for teachers and administrators to help them implement civic learning in schools. Connect professional learning in civics to Common Core State Standards professional learning experiences.
- 4) Develop an articulated sequence of instruction in civic learning across all of K-12, pegged to revised standards. At each grade level, civic learning should draw on research and include work that is action-oriented and project-based and that develops digital literacy.
- 5) Establish a communication mechanism so community stakeholders can easily connect with teachers and students on civic education and engagement. Students need to get out of the school building to practice civic engagement, and civic leaders need to come into schools to engage students.
- 6) Provide incentives for local school districts to fund civic learning in Local Control Accountability Plans under the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

Arguments in support. The Los Angeles County Office of Education writes, “On September 10, 2020, the SBE adopted criteria and guidance to award a State Seal of Civic Engagement to California students in public schools, grades 11 and 12, who demonstrate excellence in civics education and participation, including an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government. According to the law, it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a State Seal of Civic Engagement to encourage and create pathways for pupils in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels.

However, there currently is no requirement for elementary and middle schools to establish a pathway for students to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions in order to prepare them to meet the criteria to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement in grades 11 or 12.

SB 1094 will promote civic engagement by encouraging and establishing pathways for elementary and secondary school pupils to actively participate in democratic governmental institutions at various levels. Additionally, this bill would underscore the need for earlier

preparation in elementary and middle schools, creating a foundation for students to meet the criteria for the SSCE in later grades.”

Recommended Committee amendments. To conform to this Committee’s curriculum measures policy, staff recommends that this bill be amended to:

- 1) Strike the requirements that students participate in a civic engagement or experience with a governmental institution at the local, state, or national level at least once in grades 1 to 6 and again in either grade 7 or 8, and instead add “including civic engagement experiences with governmental institutions” to the course of study for grades 1 to 6, and add “including civic engagement experiences with governmental institutions, that are supportive of pupils earning the State Seal of Civic Engagement, as authorized by section 51471” to the course of study for grades 7 to 12.
- 2) Add intent language which states that instruction in elementary and secondary schools should focus on students’ understanding the foundations of the democratic system in America, the role of the three branches of government, State and Federal Constitutions; and engage with government agencies and policymakers at local, state, and federal levels.

Related legislation. AB 1520 (Bonta) of the 2023-24 Session would have required the SPI, by July 1, 2024, to select a partnership consisting of a county office of education (COE) and a community organization to serve as the State Seal of Civic Engagement Resource Lead. Specifically, the State Seal of Civic Engagement Resource Lead is to engage in a wide range of duties, including the coordination of support, provision of technical assistance, and delivery of professional learning to improve equitable access for students, especially those in marginalized communities, to the State Seal of Civic Engagement.

AB 24 (Eggman), Chapter 604, Statutes of 2017, establishes the State Seal of Civic Engagement, to be affixed to the diploma of qualifying high school graduates, based on a demonstration of excellence in civics education and participation.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda County Board of Education
 California Council for the Social Studies
 California County Superintendents
 California School Boards Association
 Californians for Civic Learning
 City of Monterey Park
 City of Santa Paula
 Civic Education Center
 Generation Citizen
 Generation Up
 iCivics
 Los Angeles County Office of Education
 Sacramento County Office of Education
 Simi Valley Unified School District
 Teach Democracy

Thinking Nation
Ventura County Office of Education
Youth Power Project
1 individual

Opposition

None on file

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