What We Know about State Civic Education Policies, and What is Next

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**Why Civic Education?**

- **Schools are guardians of democracy**
  - Prepared citizens improve public discourse and increase accountability of elected officials.
  - If you prepare students, they contribute
    - Increase in discussion of political issues, volunteer, work on community issues, more confidence in communicating with public officials
  - Strong civic education can give voice to the poor, minority urban, and rural youth
- Civic skills = workplace/21st century skills
“The better educated our citizens are, the better equipped they will be to preserve the system of government we have. And we have to start with the education of our nation’s young people. Knowledge about our government is not handed down through the gene pool. Every generation has to learn it, and we have some work to do.”

Focus of Presentation

• Civic learning goes beyond social studies classes
  – Service-learning
  – Simulations
  – Democratic processes and climate at school
  – Extracurricular opportunities

• Focus on social studies standards, courses, and assessments
# Standards are often broad and comprehensive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Number of States (and DC) with the Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time, Continuity, and Change</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>Power, Authority, and Government</td>
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<td>People, Places, and Environment</td>
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<td>Production, Distribution, and Consumption</td>
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<td>Civic Ideals and Practices</td>
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<td>Science, Technology, and Society</td>
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<td>Global Connections</td>
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<td>Culture and Diversity</td>
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<td>Real World Application</td>
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<td>Individuals, Groups, and Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Development and Identity</td>
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Course requirements

- 49 states (including the District of Columbia) require students to complete one or more social studies courses to graduate high school. The subject matter required by states varies.
- Nine states require students to pass the test to graduate.

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<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. history</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics/American government</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World history</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>15</td>
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Number of social studies units required for graduation.
Social Studies Assessment

• 21 states require state-designed social studies test in 2012-13
• A major decline from 34 states in 2001
• Florida and Maryland plan to add new mandated assessments in 2013-14
• In 2012, Tennessee became the first state to test competency in civics through project-based assessment (S2066).
Number of States with Mandated Assessment by Subject Areas

- US history: 15
- State history: 14
- World history: 8
- Civics/American government: 8
- Economics: 6
- Geography: 5
States that require social studies assessment (as of 2011-12)
States that are adding a social studies assessment (MD, FL)

Tennessee is changing its assessment to be project-based per SB 2066
Standards, courses, and testing aren’t everything.
Test or not to test?

No testing
- Civics could be skipped all together
+ Freedom for teachers
- Lack of PD resource

Testing
+ Students take Civics
- Lots of test prep at the cost of content
- Economic gaps could expand
• Testing should be done but it should be done thoughtfully.

• Innovators
  – Florida
  – Tennessee

Modes of Social Studies Testing
Source: CIRCLE
State Civic Education Policies: Advancing Accountability

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