




State Civic Education Policy



GAP ANALYSIS TOOL FOR EDUCATION LEADERS AND POLICYMAKERS

The State Civic Education Policy Gap Analysis Tool is a companion piece

THE GAP ANALYSIS TOOL IS INTENDED TO BE A FLEXIBLE RESOURCE FOR USE BY STATES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO EXAMINE POLICIES ANYWHERE ALONG THE PRESCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY SPECTRUM.

to the [State Civic Education Policy Framework](#) released by Education Commission of the States' National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement in November 2014. The seven steps prescribed by this Gap Analysis Tool guide education leaders and policymakers in comparing

current civic education policy and practices with established evidence-based best practices and competitive benchmarks, and in using this analysis to identify strategic priorities for civic education policy improvements.

The Gap Analysis Tool is intended to be a flexible resource for use by states, school districts, higher education institutions and community groups to examine policies anywhere along the preschool to postsecondary spectrum. Most state civic learning and engagement policies focus on preschool through high school, while civic education policies for higher education typically originate at the institutional level. For this reason, this Gap Analysis Tool has more elements directly applicable to schools than postsecondary institutions. Further, states have varying levels of control over schools.

For example, in states where most control of schools is at the local level, states often have very little influence on curriculum and instructional approaches. Because of these and other factors that differentiate education governance and policy across the states, users should adapt the various parts of this tool to meet their own circumstances.

Users of this Gap Analysis Tool are encouraged to gather input from a broad range of stakeholders to help ensure that results are accurate and broadly representative of diverse interests and perspectives. Users should feel free to change the type of institution (e.g., school, school district, college/university, state department of education, etc.) and accompanying terminology (e.g., grade level, degree program, teachers, educators, etc.) to meet local circumstances.



STEP 1: INVENTORY THE CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR STATE CIVIC EDUCATION POLICY.

COLLECT YOUR STATE
(AND/OR SCHOOL DISTRICT/INSTITUTION)
POLICY INFORMATION ON:

- Education mission statement.
- Education standards and curricula for all levels (preschool to postsecondary).
- Pre-service teacher licensure/accreditation requirements related to civic learning and engaged pedagogies.
- Teacher professional development policies and budgets related to civic learning and engaged pedagogies.
- Civics assessments for all levels (preschool to postsecondary).
- Tracking and reporting mechanism for civics assessment data (school, institution, district and state levels).
- Inclusion of civic assessment data on school, district and state public “report cards” or other public reporting.
- Inclusion of civics assessment in state longitudinal data systems.
- Role of civics mission, standards compliance and achievement in educator and administrator job descriptions and evaluation.
- Tracking and reporting mechanism for community impact assessment and data at the school, institution, district and state level.

Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement are your education policy team and can provide support to inventory your state’s civic education policies. State data is available through our online search feature at www.ecs.org and our database of state legislation. You can also [submit a personalized information request](#) for state policy data.

Key Civic Education Policy Elements

Effective state policies for civic education need to address the following key elements:

Policy 1: The co-equal civic purpose of education at the state, district and institutional level.

Policy 2: Standards and curricula for education at each grade level, preschool through postsecondary.

Policy 3: Standards include inquiry-based instruction that results in informed action and demonstration of learning.

Policy 4: Integration of civic learning across all academic disciplines.

Policy 5: Pre-service licensure/accreditation supports teachers as civic educators.

Policy 6: Professional development supports teachers as civic educators.

Policy 7: Assessments of student progress toward civic learning outcomes is used to measure student performance and inform instructional efforts.

Policy 8: Accountability indicators of teacher, district and school/institution performance.

Policy 9: Measures of community impact.

Additional details, sample policies and case studies can be found on page 2 of the [State Civic Education Policy Framework](#).

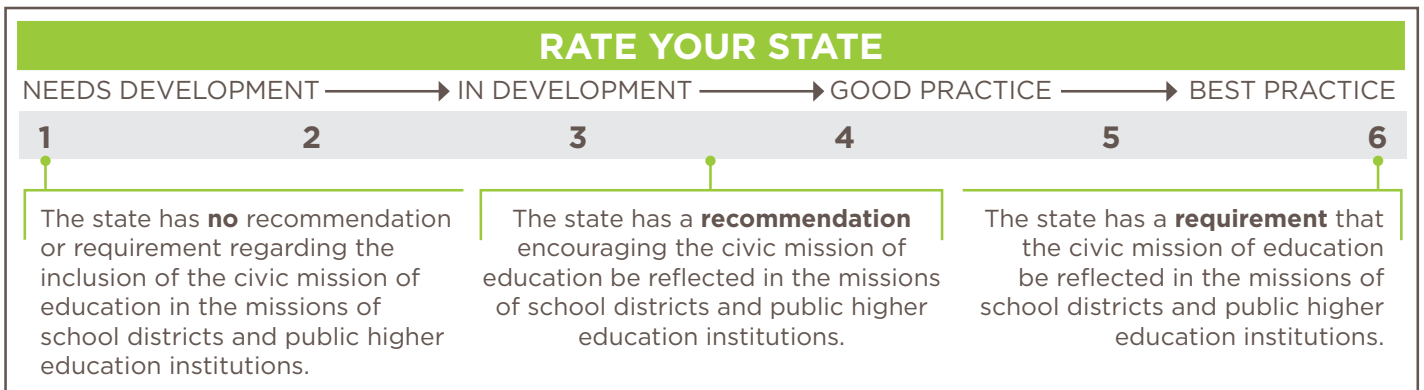


STEP 2: RATE YOUR STATE.

COMPARE YOUR CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO NINE BEST PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKS.

POLICY 1: CIVIC MISSION OF EDUCATION

- Preparation of students for full participation in civic life is included as a co-equal purpose (with preparation for college and careers) in the state education mission(s).
- The civic mission of education includes equipping students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to participate effectively in democratic life and cultivating concern and responsibility for their communities.
- The civic mission of schools is further reflected in the mission statements of public higher education institutions and school districts throughout the state.

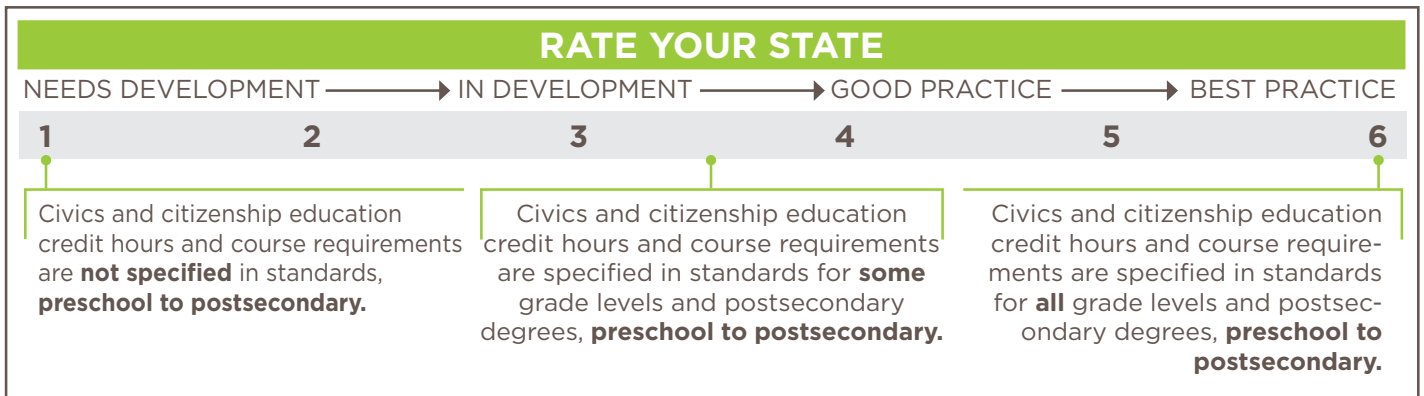


NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 2: CIVIC EDUCATION STANDARDS AND CURRICULA AT EACH GRADE LEVEL, PRESCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY

- Civics and citizenship education credit hour and course requirements (either through discrete courses or embedded within social studies curriculum) are included in state standards and curriculum frameworks for all grade levels.
- Standards establish requirements for civics knowledge in government, history, economics, law and democracy.*
- Standards include the development of civic skills such as accessing and analyzing issue information, deliberating between alternatives and problem-solving.* These goals are best accomplished through discussion and simulations that apply civic skills to real-world issues and events.
- Standards include the development of civic dispositions encompassing civic values such as a commitment to the public good, equality and rule of law, and behaviors including civility and respectful discourse.*
- The development of civic knowledge, skills and disposition through inquiry-based instruction may be guided by tools such as the C3 Social Studies Framework.



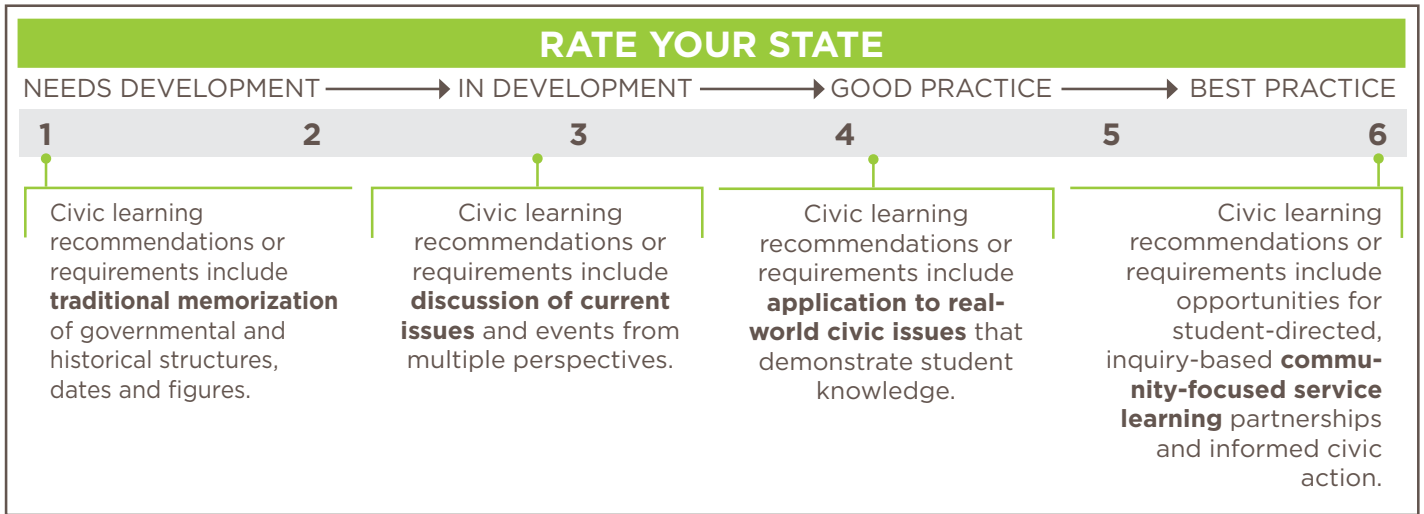
*Please see page 15 in the [State Education Policy Framework](#) for details on civic competencies and proven practices for civic education.

NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 3: STANDARDS INCLUDE INQUIRY-BASED INSTRUCTION, INFORMED ACTION AND DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

- Standards include the development of civic skills and dispositions through the hands-on application of knowledge to real-world issues that require student assessment, analysis and communication.
- Standards include participatory skills that incorporate group work, interface with elected officials and community partners, communicating perspectives and arguments, and planning strategically for civic change.
- Application of civic learning and opportunities for informed action are extended through alignment with out-of-school time/extra- or co-curricular activities.



BONUS POINTS

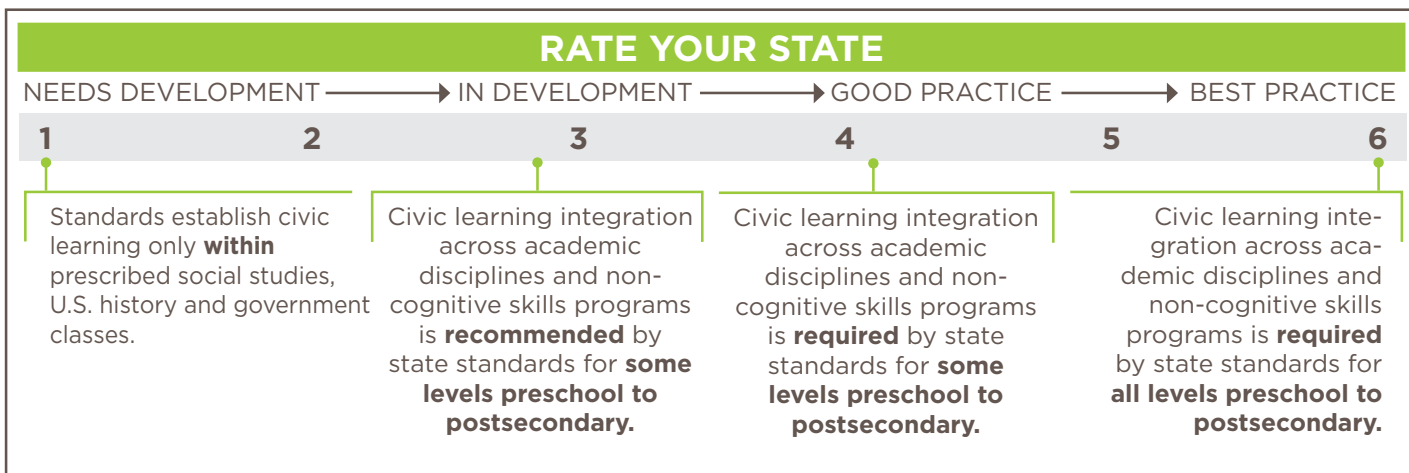
Policies promote community-based civic learning and informed action through **summer, after-school, extra- and co-curricular activities**

NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 4: INTEGRATION OF CIVIC LEARNING ACROSS ALL ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

- Curriculum across all academic disciplines incorporates civic learning.
- For example, language arts curriculum could mandate civics education reading content such as historical documents, letter writing or oral presentations.
- Engaged pedagogies across all academic disciplines build 21st century civic skills such as communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and creativity and innovation.
- Non-cognitive character education and life skills programs incorporate civic values, dispositions and responsibilities.

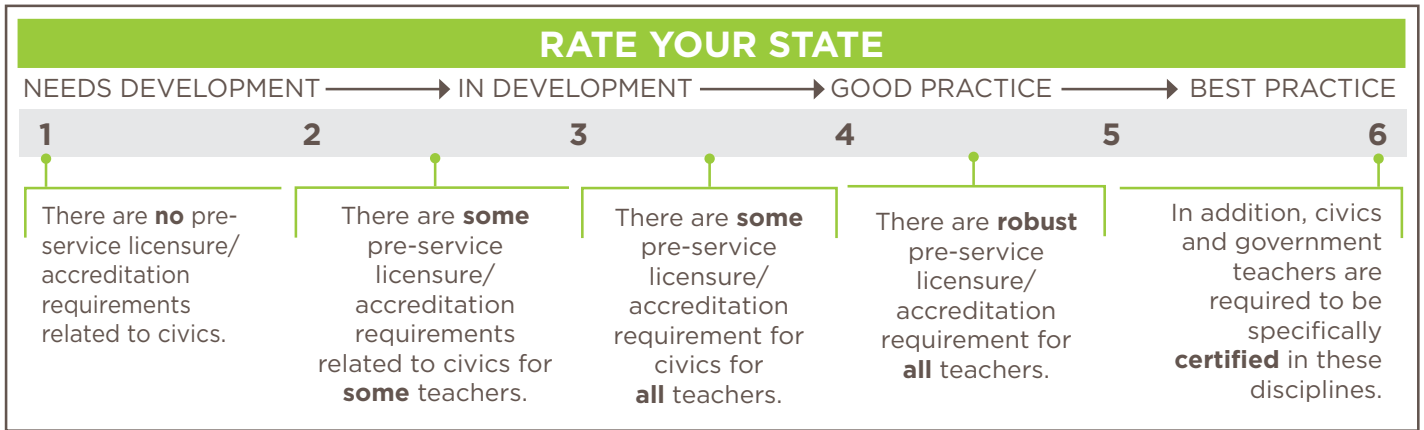


NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 5: PRE-SERVICE TEACHER LICENSURE/ACCREDITATION

- Pre-service teacher licensure/accreditation requirements related to civics knowledge, skills and dispositions prepare all teachers at all levels and in all subject areas to be civic educators.
- Pre-service teacher licensure/accreditation requirements support use of engaged pedagogies that support civic learning.
- Civics and government teachers are required to be specifically certified in these disciplines.

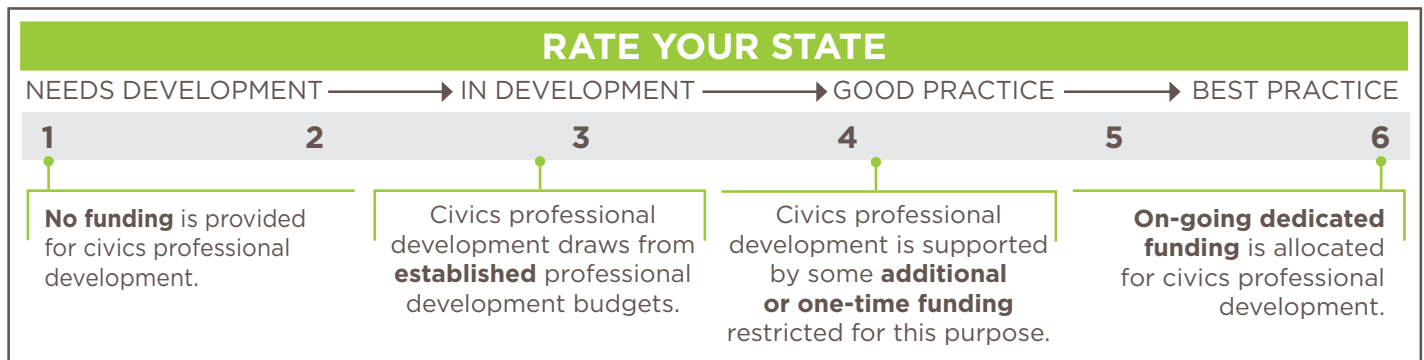
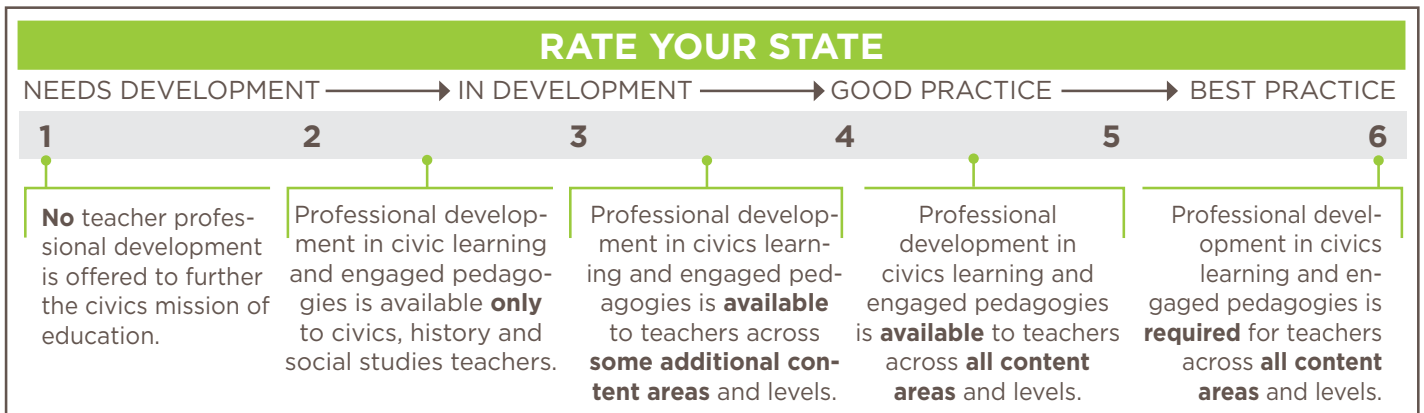


NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 6: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Teacher professional development in civics knowledge, skills and dispositions supports all teachers at all levels and in all subject areas to be civic educators.
- Teacher professional development is required in quality instructional practices and engaged pedagogies, including inquiry-based approaches such as developing questions and planning inquiries, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence.
- Teacher professional development is required to support planning and implementation of student-centered community service-learning projects applying knowledge to authentic local issues.
- Professional development for the integration of civic learning is supported by ongoing funding dedicated for this purpose.



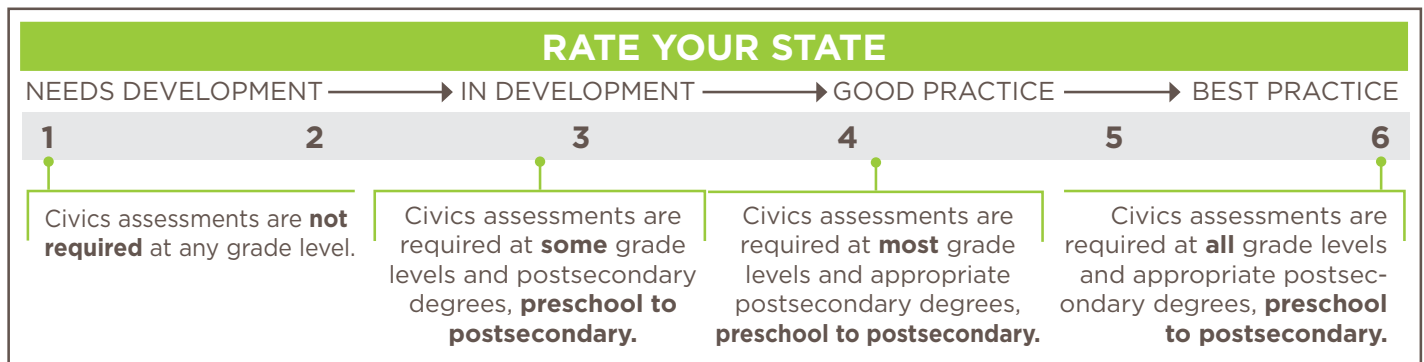
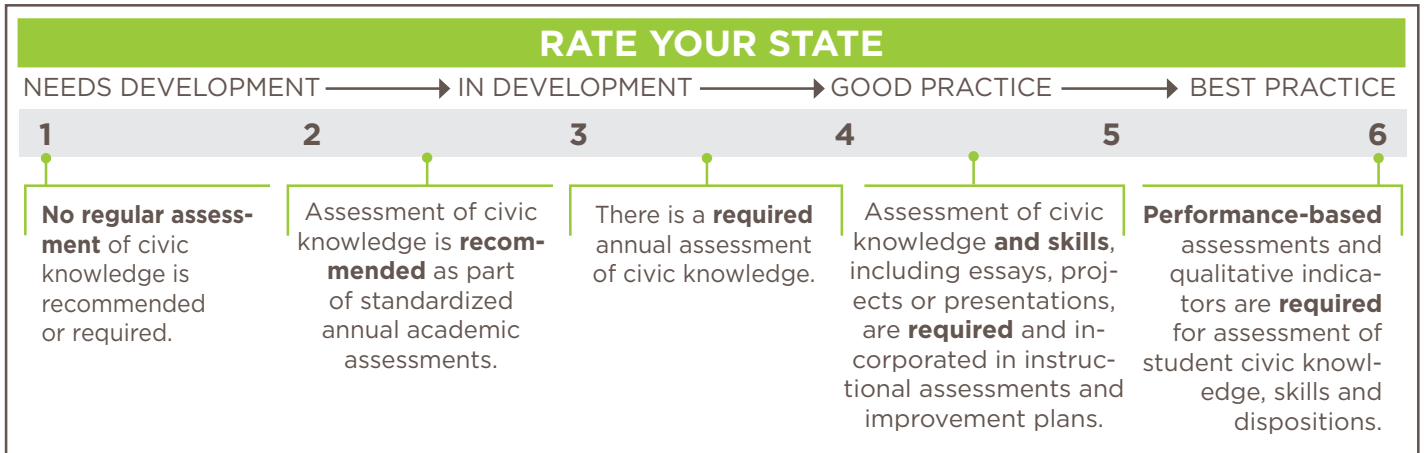
NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 7: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT CIVIC LEARNING PROGRESS

- Assessment of student progress toward civic education outcomes is used to measure student performance and inform instructional efforts.
- Annual performance-based assessments and qualitative indicators capture the development of student civic knowledge, skills and dispositions, including higher-order thinking skills.
- Indicators/metrics for civic education are included in instructional assessments and improvement plans.
- Civic education is included in assessment and planning focused on closing the achievement and civic opportunity gap* for low-income, minority and special needs students.
- Civic education assessment data is included in the state longitudinal data system.

*Please see the [State Education Policy Framework](#) Introduction for more on the connection between gaps in academic achievement and civic empowerment.

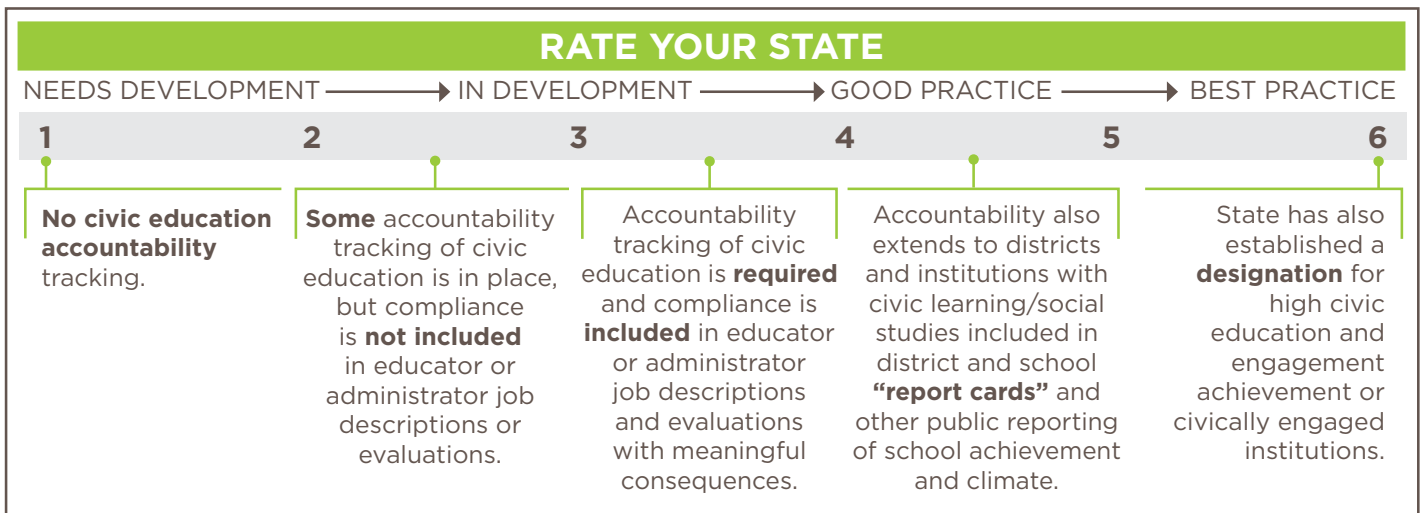


NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 8: CIVIC LEARNING ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS OF EDUCATOR AND INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

- Accountability tracking is required for civic education and is included in the state accountability system.
- Compliance with civic education standards and requirements is incorporated in job descriptions and has meaningful consequences for educator and administrator evaluations and appointment, promotion and tenure decisions.
- Compliance with civic education standards and requirements and successful civic education achievement has meaningful consequences for school districts and educational institutions.
- Civic behaviors and measures, such as student and educator surveys on bullying and open and respectful discourse, are incorporated into accountability and reporting on institutional climate.
- Civic learning/social studies outcomes are equitably included in district and school “report cards” and other public reporting of school achievement and institutional climate.
- State has a designation for high civic education and engagement achievement or civically engaged institutions.

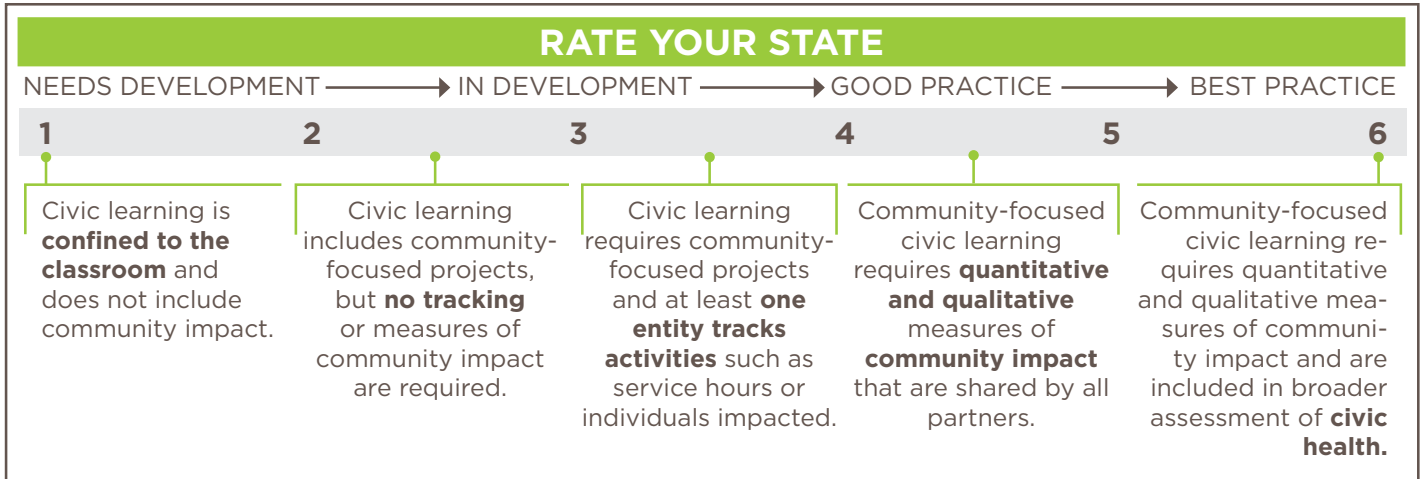


NOTES AND EVIDENCE



POLICY 9: MEASURES OF COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Civic education incorporates community-focused service-learning linked to curriculum.
- Tracking of quantitative community impact, including service hours and accomplishments, is established and reported.
- Surveys and community input are included in qualitative measures of community impact, which encompasses both contributions to the community and connections between residents, communities and schools.
- Community and neighborhoods surveys incorporate measures of student community impact and relationships as an element of civic health.



NOTES AND EVIDENCE



STEP 3: IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE POTENTIAL CIVIC POLICY IMPROVEMENTS.

Consider policies where your state rated lowest, the significance of the gap between current and best practices, and the potential impact of policy change. We have used the same scoring system and weight for all of the civic learning and engagement policies, but you may chose to prioritize and weight specific goals above others.

NOTES AND EVIDENCE

STEP 4: ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIC POLICY CHANGE.

Consider both support and barriers to policy change and determine resources and capacity needed to overcome resistance to civic policy change.

NOTES AND EVIDENCE

STEP 5: DETERMINE STRATEGIC CIVIC EDUCATION POLICY GOALS FOR ADOPTION.

What are your areas of greatest impact and opportunity given the civic education policy climate?

NOTES AND EVIDENCE



STEP 6: DEVELOP A CIVIC EDUCATION POLICY ACTION PLAN.

YOUR PLAN SHOULD DELINEATE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND TIMELINE.

Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement are your education policy team and can provide support to develop your Civic Education Policy Action Plan. This may include sharing research and reports, personalized guidance and counsel, facilitation and presentations at meetings, conferences and convenings and unbiased legislative testimony. For support with your Civic Education Policy Action Plan, please complete an [information request](#) or contact the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement at (303) 299.3661 or jbrennan@ecs.org.

NOTES AND EVIDENCE

STEP 7: FOLLOW THROUGH.

- Create a follow-up plan and timeline to monitor and assess progress towards civic education policy goals and strategically revise adoption strategies.
- Plan a next round of civic education policy gap analysis to identify new target improvements and continue closing the gap between current and best civic policies and practices.

NOTES AND EVIDENCE

AUTHOR

Jan Brennan is a project leader with Education Commission of the States' National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement, supporting the development and success of programs that prepare students for full participation in democratic life. Contact Jan at (303) 299.3661 or jbrennan@ecs.org.

© 2016 by the Education Commission of the States. All rights reserved. Education Commission of the States encourages its readers to share our information with others. To request permission to reprint or excerpt some of our material, please contact us at (303) 299.3609 or e-mail askinner@ecs.org.

Education Commission of the States | 700 Broadway Suite 810 Denver, CO 80203

