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Civics Education Amendments

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

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LONG TITLE

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General Description:

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This bill amends certain graduation requirements.

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Highlighted Provisions:

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This bill:

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▸ adds a social studies graduation requirement;

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▸ requires certain social studies related instruction;

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▸ extends a deadline for certain instructional materials recommendations;

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▸ removes a testing requirement;

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▸ provides for alternatives to portions of certain graduation requirements; and

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▸ makes technical changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

This bill provides a special effective date.

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53E-4-204, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapters 346, 527

53E-4-204.1, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2024, Chapter 20

53E-4-205, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2021, Chapter 114

ENACTS:

53E-4-205.2, Utah Code Annotated 1953

REPEALS:

53E-4-205.1, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2020, Third Special Session, Chapter 10

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53E-4-204** is amended to read:

53E-4-204 . Standards and graduation requirements.

- (1) The state board shall establish rigorous core standards for Utah public schools and graduation requirements under Section 53E-3-501 for grades 9 through 12 that:
- (a) are consistent with state law and federal regulations;
 - (b) use competency-based standards and assessments;
 - (c) include instruction that stresses general financial literacy from basic budgeting to financial investments, including bankruptcy education and a general financial literacy test-out option;[~~and~~]
 - (d) include graduation requirements in language arts, mathematics, and science that exceed:
 - (i) 3.0 units in language arts including up to 0.5 units emphasizing verbal communication completed in a course or a school sponsored activity;
 - (ii) 2.0 units in mathematics; and
 - (iii) and 2.0 units in science[~~;~~] ; and
 - (e) include a graduation requirement in social studies that is equal to or exceeds 3.5 units, including at least 1.0 unit in American constitutional government and citizenship as described in Section 53E-4-205.2;
 - (f) ensure up to 0.5 units described in Subsection (1)(e) may be earned by:

(i) completing a course or a school sponsored activity emphasizing verbal communication provided that a significant portion of the course or activity is dedicated to civic education, including:

(A) policy analysis;

(B) governmental systems; and

(C) civic engagement; or

(ii) participation in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps described in 10 U.S.C Sec. 2031.

(2) The state board shall establish competency-based standards and assessments for elective courses.

(3) The state board shall study requiring all LEAs to issue a high school diploma to students who receive:

(a) an associate's degree with at least 60 credit hours from an accredited post-secondary institution; or

(b) an industry certification with at least 500 hours of instruction from a business, trade association, or other industry group in accordance with Section 53E-3-501.

Section 2. Section **53E-4-204.1** is amended to read:

53E-4-204.1 . Ethnic studies core standards and curriculum requirements.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Core standards for Utah public schools" or "core standards" means the standards the state board establishes as described in Section 53E-4-202.

(b) "Ethnic studies" means the interdisciplinary social and historical study of how different populations have experienced and participated in building the United States of America, including the study of the culture, history, and contributions of Utahns of diverse ethnicities.

(c) "Ethnic Studies Commission" means the Ethnic Studies Commission created in Section 63C-28-201.

(d) "Utahns of diverse ethnicities" means individuals who are residents of Utah and:

(i) Native American;

(ii) Alaska Native;

(iii) Native Hawaiian;

(iv) Pacific Islander;

(v) Hispanic or Latino;

(vi) Black or African American;

- 82 (vii) Asian or Asian American; or
83 (viii) from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- 84 (2)(a) The state board shall incorporate ethnic studies into the core standards for Utah
85 public schools.
- 86 (b) Before the state board takes formal action to incorporate ethnic studies into the core
87 standards, the state board shall:
- 88 (i) consult with the Ethnic Studies Commission; and
89 (ii) submit the proposed core standards incorporating ethnic studies to the Ethnic
90 Studies Commission for review and recommendations.
- 91 (3) In incorporating ethnic studies into the core standards, the state board shall consider, at
92 a minimum:
- 93 (a) existing core standards that increase cultural awareness of, and focus on the character
94 traits described in Section 53G-10-204 for, all Utah communities;
- 95 (b) opportunities to recognize and incorporate into the ethnic studies core standards the
96 histories, contributions, and perspectives of Utahns of diverse ethnicities; and
97 (c) recommendations of the Ethnic Studies Commission.
- 98 (4) Subject to legislative appropriations, the state board shall provide funding for
99 professional learning in ethnic studies for teachers.
- 100 (5)(a) By December 31, [2025] 2027, an LEA shall select curriculum and instructional
101 materials for teaching ethnic studies to students in kindergarten through grade 12 that:
- 102 (i) align with the core standards incorporating ethnic studies described in this section;
103 and
104 (ii) are integrated with regular school work.
- 105 (b) An LEA shall implement an ethnic studies curriculum that, at a minimum:
- 106 (i) focuses on shared identity and honoring unique cultural differences, including:
107 (A) that each individual student has unique characteristics;
108 (B) the common elements that unite Utahns; and
109 (C) respect for distinct socio-cultural identities; and
110 (ii) includes themes including cultural histories within the context of United States
111 history and global history.
- 112 (c) An LEA shall:
- 113 (i) modify or revise as needed the ethnic studies instructional materials and
114 curriculum the LEA selects as described in Subsection (5)(a), to ensure alignment
115 with core standards incorporating ethnic studies; and

- 116 (ii) submit a report to the state board that provides evidence that the LEA is
117 complying with the requirements of Subsections (5)(a) and (b).
- 118 (d) In fulfilling the requirements of this section, an LEA may offer a course on ethnic
119 studies.
- 120 (6) The state board shall, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative
121 Rulemaking Act, make rules:
- 122 (a) to develop guidelines and methods for LEAs to more fully incorporate ethnic studies
123 into other core standards for Utah public schools courses; and
124 (b) for the report described in Subsection (5)(c).
- 125 (7) The guidelines and methods described in Subsection (6)(a) may not change:
- 126 (a) the number of instructional hours required for elementary and secondary students; or
127 (b) the number of instructional hours dedicated to the existing curriculum.
- 128 Section 3. Section **53E-4-205** is amended to read:
- 129 **53E-4-205 . American civics education initiative for adult education.**
- 130 (1) As used in this section:
- 131 (a) "Adult education program" means an organized educational program below the
132 postsecondary level, other than a regular full-time K-12 secondary education
133 program, provided by an LEA or nonprofit organization that provides the opportunity
134 for an adult to further the adult's high school level education.
- 135 (b) "Basic civics test" means a test that includes 50 of the questions on the civics test
136 form used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services:
- 137 (i) to determine that an individual applying for United States citizenship meets the
138 basic citizenship skills specified in 8 U.S.C. Sec. 1423; and
139 (ii) in accordance with 8 C.F.R. Sec. 312.2.
- 140 (2)[(a) ~~Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), the~~] The state board shall require[:]
- 141 [(i) a public school student who graduates on or after January 1, 2016, to pass a basic
142 civics test as a condition for receiving a high school diploma; and]
- 143 [(ii)] _a student enrolled in an adult education program to pass a basic civics test as a
144 condition for receiving an adult education secondary diploma.
- 145 [(b) The state board may require a public school student to pass an alternate assessment
146 instead of a basic civics test if the student qualifies for an alternate assessment, as
147 defined in state board rule made in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
148 Administrative Rulemaking Act.]
- 149 (3) An individual who correctly answers a minimum of 35 out of the 50 questions on a

basic civics test passes the test and an individual who correctly answers fewer than 35 out of 50 questions on a basic civics test does not pass the test.

(4) In accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, the state board shall make rules that:

~~[(a) require an LEA that serves secondary students to administer a basic civics test or alternate assessment to a public school student enrolled in the LEA;]~~

~~[(b)]~~ (a) require an adult education program provider to administer a basic civics test to an individual who intends to receive an adult education secondary diploma; and

~~[(e)]~~ (b) allow an individual to take a basic civics test as many times as needed in order to pass the test~~[-and]~~ .

~~[(d) for the alternate assessment described in Subsection (2)(b), describe:]~~

~~[(i) the content of an alternate assessment;]~~

~~[(ii) how a public school student qualifies for an alternate assessment; and]~~

~~[(iii) how an LEA determines if a student passes an alternate assessment.]~~

Section 4. Section **53E-4-205.2** is enacted to read:

53E-4-205.2 . American constitutional government and citizenship course standards.

(1) Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, and as part of the social studies requirement established under Section 53E-4-204, the state board shall require instruction on American constitutional government and citizenship.

(2) In accordance with Subsections (3) and (4), the state board shall create standards for the course required under Subsection (1) that:

(a) examine American founding principles, including:

(i) classical republicanism, natural rights, and colonial religious traditions; and

(ii) the text and principles of the Declaration of Independence and relationship to the United States Constitution;

(b) examine the text of the United States Constitution, including:

(i) structure, powers, and limits of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches;
and

(ii) the principles and operation of federalism and the state constitutional tradition;

(c) examine the development of the United States Constitution through amendments, including:

(i) the creation and application of the Bill of Rights;

(ii) the adoption and enforcement of the Civil War and Reconstruction Amendments;

- 184 and
- 185 (iii) the adoption and enforcement of the other voting rights amendments; and
- 186 (d) examine the practice of self-government at the state and local level, including:
- 187 (i) the Utah Constitution and local government, including counties, municipalities,
- 188 and tribal governments;
- 189 (ii) state and local elections, including the current candidate nomination and
- 190 selection; and
- 191 (iii) the responsibilities of citizenship and participation in civil society.
- 192 (3) The course described in this section shall prioritize a close reading of the following
- 193 primary source documents:
- 194 (a) the Mayflower Compact;
- 195 (b) the Declaration of Independence;
- 196 (c) the Iroquois Constitution;
- 197 (d) the United States Constitution;
- 198 (e) George Washington's Farewell Address;
- 199 (f) selected passages from the Federalist and Antifederalist Papers;
- 200 (g) the Articles of Confederation;
- 201 (h) speeches of Frederick Douglass;
- 202 (i) the Lincoln-Douglas Debates;
- 203 (j) speeches of Abraham Lincoln;
- 204 (k) the Seneca Falls Declaration;
- 205 (l) the Letter from Birmingham Jail;
- 206 (m) the Utah Constitution; and
- 207 (n) other essential documents from American constitutional history.
- 208 (4) The state board shall, in collaboration with the Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative
- 209 within the Center for Constitutional Studies at Utah Valley University, develop
- 210 standards that fulfill the requirements of this section.
- 211 Section 5. **Repealer.**
- 212 This bill repeals:
- 213 Section **53E-4-205.1, Waiver of basic civics test graduation requirement.**
- 214 Section 6. **Effective Date.**
- 215 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.