
Wisconsin Legislative Council

AMENDMENT MEMO



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2021 Assembly Bill 563

Assembly Amendments 3 and 5

2021 ASSEMBLY BILL 563

Assembly Bill 563 imposes requirements on the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), public schools, and private schools relating to civics education. The bill requires DPI to promulgate administrative rules to develop a model curriculum and related instructional materials for every grade level, which must include certain content.

Specifically, the DPI curriculum and materials must assist students in developing the following: (1) an understanding of shared rights and responsibilities and founding principles of the United States, including history and content of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights, as well as arguments contained in the Federalist Papers; (2) a sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at all levels; (3) an understanding of the process for effectively advocating before governmental bodies and officials; (4) an understanding of civic-minded expectations of an upright and desirable citizenry that accepts responsibility for preserving and defending the benefits of liberty; and (5) knowledge of governing philosophies of other nations, including communism, socialism, and totalitarianism, and how they compare with the founding principles of the United States. DPI must also curate oral history resources for use along with the civic education curriculum that are based on personal stories of diverse individuals who demonstrate civic-minded qualities.

The bill also requires school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools to provide instruction in civics education consistent with the DPI model curriculum. Additionally, school districts must require students to complete at least 0.5 credits of civics instruction to receive a high school diploma. The credit requirement for high school graduation does not apply to independent charter schools or private schools.

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 3

Assembly Amendment 3 requires school districts and independent charter schools to report to DPI how they are meeting the civics instruction requirement, and requires DPI to compile the information and submit an annual report to the Assembly and Senate Committees on Education. The amendment does not impose a reporting requirement on private schools.

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 5

Assembly Amendment 5 removes the requirement for private schools to provide civics instruction consistent with the DPI model curriculum and replaces it with an altered requirement that applies only to private schools participating in a parental choice program (“choice school”). The amendment requires a choice school to include in its curriculum instruction in civic education the topics listed above, and to use the oral history resources curated by DPI.

The amendment also makes a change to the existing statute requiring all private schools to provide a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science, and health. Current law includes an exception stating that private schools are not required to include in their curriculum any concept, topic, or practice in conflict with the program's religious doctrines or to exclude any concept, topic, or practice consistent with the program's religious doctrines. The amendment adds the words "or mission" to this provision, such that a private school is not required to include any concept, topic, or practice in conflict with the program's religious doctrines or mission, or to exclude any concept, topic, or practice consistent with the program's religious doctrines or mission.

BILL HISTORY

Assembly Amendment 3 was introduced by Representative Wittke on September 21, 2021. On September 22, 2021, the Assembly Committee on Education adopted Assembly Amendment 3 and recommended passage of the bill, as amended, on votes of Ayes, 10; Noes, 5.

Assembly Amendment 5 was introduced by Representatives Vos and Thiesfeldt, and adopted by the full Assembly, on September 28, 2021. The Assembly then passed Assembly Bill 563 on a vote of Ayes, 61; Noes, 37.

KBO:ksm