



2023 SENATE BILL 837

December 19, 2023 - Introduced by Senators WANGGAARD and CABRAL-GUEVARA, cosponsored by Representatives NEDWESKI, VOS, BEHNKE, BINSFELD, DITTRICH, DONOVAN, EDMING, GUNDRUM, MAXEY, MICHALSKI, MURPHY, NOVAK, O'CONNOR, RETTINGER, ROZAR, SCHRAA, SPIROS, STEFFEN, SUMMERFIELD, TUSLER, WICHGERS and HURD. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 **AN ACT** *to amend* 118.165 (1) (d) and 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b.; and *to create* 115.28
2 (55v), 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m., 118.40 (2x) (b) 2. m., 118.60 (2) (a) 10., 119.23 (2) (a)
3 10. and 121.02 (1) (L) 9. of the statutes; **relating to:** required instruction in
4 civics in the elementary and high school grades, high school graduation
5 requirements, and private school educational program criteria.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill requires the state superintendent of public instruction to promulgate rules to develop a model curriculum and instructional materials for grades kindergarten to 12 on civics to prepare pupils to be civically responsible and knowledgeable adults. The model curriculum and instructional materials must be designed to assist pupils in developing all of the following:

1. An understanding of pupils' shared rights and responsibilities as residents of this state and the United States and of the founding principles of the United States.

2. A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at the local, state, and federal levels.

3. An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before governmental bodies and officials.

4. An understanding of the civic-minded expectations of an upright and desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and defending the benefits of liberty inherited from previous generations and secured by the U.S. Constitution.

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5. Knowledge of other nations' governing philosophies, including communism, socialism, and totalitarianism, and an understanding of how those philosophies compare with the philosophy and principles of freedom and representative democracy essential to the founding principles of the United States.

Under the bill, the state superintendent must curate oral history resources to be used along with the model curriculum. Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, the bill requires school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental choice program to include in their respective curricula instruction in civics that includes the five components required to be included in the model curriculum. The bill also requires school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental choice program to annually report to the Department of Public Instruction regarding how they are meeting the civics instruction requirement created under the bill. DPI must then compile the information and submit it to the legislature.

Finally, under current law, a school board may grant a high school diploma to a pupil only if the pupil meets specific statutory requirements, including earning a certain number of credits in various subjects in the high school grades. Currently, a pupil must earn at least three credits of social studies, including state and local government. The bill specifies that the social studies credits also must include one-half credit of civics instruction. This graduation requirement first applies to pupils who graduate in the 2027-28 school year.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** 115.28 (55v) of the statutes is created to read:

2 115.28 (**55v**) CIVICS EDUCATION CURRICULUM. (a) Promulgate rules to develop
3 a model curriculum and related instructional materials for grades kindergarten to
4 12 on civics to prepare pupils to be civically responsible and knowledgeable adults.
5 In developing the model curriculum and instructional materials, the state
6 superintendent shall ensure that they are designed to assist pupils in developing all
7 of the following:

8 1. An understanding of pupils' shared rights and responsibilities as residents
9 of this state and the United States and of the founding principles of the United
10 States, including all of the following:

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1 a. The history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including
2 natural and popular sovereignty and self-evident truth, and how those concepts
3 form the philosophical foundations of government.

4 b. The history, meaning, significance, and effect of provisions of the U.S.
5 Constitution and the Bill of Rights and how those documents provide the structure
6 of government.

7 c. The arguments in support of adopting the republican form of government,
8 including those arguments contained in the Federalist Papers.

9 2. A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government
10 at the local, state, and federal levels.

11 3. An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before
12 governmental bodies and officials.

13 4. An understanding of the civic-minded expectations of an upright and
14 desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and
15 defending the benefits of liberty inherited from previous generations and secured by
16 the U.S. Constitution.

17 5. Knowledge of other nations' governing philosophies, including communism,
18 socialism, and totalitarianism, and an understanding of how those philosophies
19 compare with the philosophy and principles of freedom and representative
20 democracy essential to the founding principles of the United States.

21 (b) Curate oral history resources, to be used along with the civics curriculum
22 developed under par. (a), that provide portraits in patriotism based on the personal
23 stories of diverse individuals who demonstrate civic-minded qualities, including
24 first-person accounts of victims of other nations' governing philosophies who are
25 able to compare those philosophies with those of the United States.

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1 (c) Notify school boards, operators of charter schools under s. 118.40 (2r) or (2x),
2 and governing bodies of private schools participating in a program under s. 118.60
3 or 119.23 that the civics curriculum developed under par. (a) and the oral history
4 resources are available from the department.

5 (d) Annually compile and submit the information the department receives
6 under ss. 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. and (2x) (b) 2. m., 118.60 (2) (a) 10., 119.23 (2) (a) 10.,
7 and 121.02 (1) (L) 9. b. to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature
8 under s. 13.172 (3).

9 **SECTION 2.** 118.165 (1) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

10 118.165 (1) (d) The program provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of
11 fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies,
12 science, and health. This subsection does not require the program to include in its
13 curriculum any concept, topic, or practice in conflict with the program's religious
14 doctrines or mission or to exclude from its curriculum any concept, topic, or practice
15 consistent with the program's religious doctrines or mission.

16 **SECTION 3.** 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. of the statutes is amended to read:

17 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. At least 3 credits of social studies, including state and local
18 government, that includes at least 0.5 credit of civics instruction.

19 **SECTION 4.** 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. of the statutes is created to read:

20 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. A requirement that the charter school's curriculum include
21 the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. a. and that the charter
22 school annually report to the department regarding how the charter school
23 governing board is meeting the requirement under this subd. 2. m.

24 **SECTION 5.** 118.40 (2x) (b) 2. m. of the statutes is created to read:

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1 118.40 **(2x)** (b) 2. m. A requirement that the charter school's curriculum include
2 the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. a. and that the charter
3 school annually report to the department regarding how the charter school
4 governing board is meeting the requirement under this subd. 2. m.

5 **SECTION 6.** 118.60 (2) (a) 10. of the statutes is created to read:

6 118.60 **(2)** (a) 10. The private school includes in its curriculum the instruction
7 in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. a. and annually reports to the department
8 regarding how the private school is meeting the requirement under this subdivision.

9 **SECTION 7.** 119.23 (2) (a) 10. of the statutes is created to read:

10 119.23 **(2)** (a) 10. The private school includes in its curriculum the instruction
11 in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. a. and annually reports to the department
12 regarding how the private school is meeting the requirement under this subdivision.

13 **SECTION 8.** 121.02 (1) (L) 9. of the statutes is created to read:

14 121.02 **(1)** (L) 9. a. Include instruction in civics that includes the topics and
15 pupil development goals described under s. 115.28 (55v) (a) 1. to 5.

16 b. Annually report to the department regarding how the school board is
17 meeting the requirement under subd. 9. a.

18 **SECTION 9. Initial applicability.**

19 (1) The treatment of s. 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. and **(2x)** (b) 2. m. first applies to a
20 contract that is entered into, renewed, or modified on the effective date of this
21 subsection.

22 (2) The treatment of s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. first applies to curriculum for the
23 2025-26 school year.

24 (3) The treatment of s. 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. first applies to a pupil who graduates
25 in the 2027-28 school year.

