

## Civic Education Assessments in Tennessee

February 2013

### Key Points

Public Chapter 1036 passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in 2012 requires that, beginning in 2012–13, school districts assess students in civics—the study of government and citizenship—at least once in grades 4 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12. The legislation is significant because it is the first time the state has required an assessment for civics.

The new civics assessments will differ from other state-mandated assessments in two important respects: (1) they will not be standardized tests developed by vendors according to state-determined specifications, but instead are to be developed and implemented by school districts, and (2) they are required to be project-based. Project-based learning involves student-driven projects that are both central to the curriculum and rooted in the “real world,” involving complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems.

This brief provides an overview of the evolution of civics instruction in U.S. public schools, how civics is taught and tested in Tennessee schools, and the Tennessee Department of Education’s implementation of Public Chapter 1036 and project-based assessments for civics in Tennessee. Appendix A of the report documents measures passed between 1929 and 2012 by Tennessee legislators to affect the civic education of students.

### Introduction

The Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 1036 in 2012 requiring that school districts assess students in civics—the study of government and citizenship—at least once in grades 4 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12.<sup>1</sup> The legislation is significant because it is the first time the state has required an assessment for civics. Previous state testing requirements are still in effect, but cover civics only minimally: the social studies TCAP tests for grades 3–8 contain some civics-related questions;<sup>2</sup> the U.S. Government high school course has no corresponding end-of-course test.<sup>3</sup>

The new civics assessments, to begin in the 2012–13 school year, will differ from other state-mandated assessments in two important respects: (1) they will not be standardized tests developed by vendors according to state-determined specifications, but instead are to be developed and implemented by school districts, and (2) they are required to be project-based. Project-based

assessments differ considerably from the multiple choice format that dominates most standardized testing. Project-based learning involves student-driven projects that are both central to the curriculum and rooted in the “real world,” involving complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems. Students work to develop solutions that could actually be employed to address the issue being studied.<sup>4</sup> Public Chapter 1036 defines “project-based” as “an approach that engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through a student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.”<sup>5</sup>

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Over the past several decades, the Tennessee General Assembly has enacted several pieces of legislation to address the issue of civic education in public schools. Appendix A depicts a timeline of legislation related to civic education in Tennessee public schools, dating back to legislation passed in 1929. Legislative interest in civic education has been particularly high in the last few years.

This brief provides an overview of the evolution of civics instruction in U.S. public schools, how civics is taught and tested in Tennessee schools, and the implementation of Public Chapter 1036 and project-based assessments for civics in Tennessee.

### **How Civics is Taught and Tested in Tennessee Schools**

#### *Social Studies Curriculum Standards*

Tennessee addresses “Governance and Civics” within its social studies standards, which also encompass several other disciplines.<sup>6</sup> (See the pullout box titled “Social studies and civic education.”) Current Tennessee social studies standards for grades K–12 were last revised in 2002 and are aligned with the national standards created by the National Council on Social Studies (NCSS) in 1994.<sup>7,8</sup> According to NCSS, “the core mission of social studies education is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to become effective citizens.”<sup>9</sup> In 2010, NCSS revised its social studies standards with a “sharper focus on Purposes; Questions for Exploration; Knowledge (what learners need to understand); Processes (what learners will be capable of doing); and Products (how learners demonstrate understanding).”<sup>10</sup> These revisions were created in response to the development of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English-language arts.<sup>11</sup> Current Tennessee standards do not reflect the 2010 NCSS revisions.<sup>12</sup>

In kindergarten through grade 12, civic standards are generally interwoven throughout the social studies curriculum rather than taught in a stand-alone course. In the elementary and middle grades, civics is usually taught in the framework of a social studies class.<sup>13</sup> For grades 9–12, three credits in social studies are required for graduation.<sup>14</sup> This includes one-half credit in U.S. Government.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, students must complete one credit in U.S. History, one-half credit in Economics, and one credit in either World History or Geography.<sup>16</sup> One-half credit in Personal Finance is required beginning with the freshman class of 2009.<sup>17</sup> These three credits may be met either by combining these subjects or by offering them as separate courses.<sup>18</sup> Students may choose to take additional social studies courses, if offered, such as Psychology, Contemporary Issues, Modern History, Ancient History, African-American History, and a selection of Advanced Placement options.<sup>19</sup> In the 2007 survey conducted by the Commission on Civic Education in Tennessee, 49 percent of respondents reported that their school or district did not have a required, stand-alone civics course offered in grades 6 through 12, and 25 percent of

#### **History and civic education**

For a time, citizenship education, or civics, was taught primarily within the subject area of history. This approach was designed to teach students facts, but also help them develop good judgment

. . . in selecting the grounds of an opinion, in accumulating materials for an opinion, in putting things together, in generalizing upon facts, in estimating character, in applying the lessons of history to current events, and in accustoming children to state their conclusions in their own words.

Source: National Educational Association, Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, 1894.

#### **Social studies and civic education**

The field of social studies comprises a variety of subject areas, including civic education. For example, the social studies curriculum standards for Tennessee elementary and middle school grades cover five components: Culture, Geography, Economics, Governance and Civics, and History. The social studies curriculum standards for the high school grades cover several different history courses, including American history, as well as separate courses for Geography, Economics, U.S. Government, Personal Finance, Sociology, Psychology, and Contemporary Issues.

respondents said that their school offered an elective civics course in grades 6 through 12.<sup>20</sup>

In 2011, the General Assembly requested that the Tennessee State Board of Education (SBE) review the curriculum standards for civics education to determine if the current level of instruction is “designed to effectively and rigorously educate children in local, state, and federal government.”<sup>21</sup> The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) published a response on behalf of the SBE that stated the following conclusions on the level of civic instruction in schools:

- Current Tennessee social studies standards cover civics well if they are given adequate instruction time.
- Good instruction requires time for project-based instruction to allow students to interact and understand the principles of civics.
- The focus on reading and math under NCLB resulted in less instruction time and less professional development for social studies and science.
- Past efforts to implement project-based learning in civics in Tennessee resulted in positive gains in student achievement scores in both social studies and reading.<sup>22, 23</sup>

TDOE recommended no additions or adjustments to the state’s social studies curriculum standards, but found that professional development for teachers on the use of project-based instruction was necessary for proper classroom implementation.<sup>24</sup>

### Expected revisions to Tennessee’s social studies standards and graduation requirements

In winter 2013, TDOE will begin revising its social studies standards for expected implementation during the 2014–15 school year. Among the reasons for revision, a TDOE report says that current standards “represent minimal expectations rather than appropriate aspirations for student learning” and “pay insufficient attention to Civics.” The new standards will also incorporate Common Core literacy standards specific to social studies. According to TDOE staff, standards and testing will remain as they are currently for the 2013–14 school year. A new assessment reflecting the revised social studies standards will begin in the 2014–15 school year. Review of textbooks will occur during the 2013–14 school year, allowing districts to purchase new textbooks for use along with the new social studies standards during the 2014–15 school year. The Social Studies Leadership Council will develop a rubric for textbook evaluation for district use in spring 2013. In other related changes, beginning in 2014–15, incoming freshman graduation requirements will include U.S. History I, U.S. History II, and Civics and Economics. Previously, requirements included World History or World Geography, U.S. History, and U.S. Government and Economics. The Civics course will be very similar to the current U.S. Government course, but will include standards pertaining to local and state governance structures in Tennessee, along with a heavy emphasis on the study of primary source documents.

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, “Social Studies Standards Revision: Report,” released Jan. 15, 2013, in TDOE’s Director Update and “Revised Social Studies Proposal,” released Feb. 5, 2013, TDOE’s Director Update. Emily Barton, Tennessee Department of Education, e-mail, Jan. 23, 2013.

### The Evolution of Civics Instruction in U.S. Public Schools

In 1789, Thomas Jefferson wrote that “Wherever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government.” Jefferson believed that educating citizens would give them the knowledge and skills necessary to guard against the potential for tyranny of those in power, and that all citizens should be educated “without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental condition or circumstance.” Horace Mann, often called the “father of American public education,” held similar ideals and, beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, was influential in spreading the idea of the “common school” in the United States. As the number of public schools increased, one of the primary goals was to ensure the development of civic skills and attitudes among young people in the United States. This was also deemed necessary in part to assimilate the large number of immigrants to the U.S. in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Public schools were viewed as the place where most Americans would learn the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship.”

Sources: Library of Congress, “Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price, Paris, Jan. 8, 1789,” <http://www.loc.gov/>. The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,” <http://www.monticello.org/>. Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles Over School Reform*, Simon & Schuster: New York, 2000, pp. 20 and 25. History.com, “United States Immigration Before 1965,” <http://www.history.com/>. Dr. Dan Prinzing, Assistant Professor and Director, Office of College School Partnerships and Field Experiences, Boise State University, “Americanization, Immigration, and Civic Education: The Education of the ‘Ignorant and Free,’” Sept. 2004, <http://www.civiced.org/>.

## Assessments

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) does not include a separate civics test for students. The social studies TCAP assessment for grades 3–8 includes a limited number of questions focused on “Governance and Civics” drawn from the state’s social studies curriculum standards.<sup>25</sup> Student results from social studies TCAP assessments will no longer figure into the state’s accountability system, as expressed in the waiver from provisions of No Child Left Behind granted to Tennessee by the U.S. Department of Education in June 2012, but will continue to be used as a part of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) composite scores for teachers.<sup>26, 27</sup> There are no statewide assessments in either social studies or civics for grades 9–12. An end-of-course exam is required for U.S. History, which contains some civics-related content, but the U.S. Government course, which is more specific to civics, has no corresponding end-of-course test.<sup>28</sup> TDOE posts statewide results for the end-of-course U.S. History exam online: in 2012, 95.3 percent of high school students tested at the proficient or advanced level.<sup>29</sup> See Appendix C for the 2012 Statewide TCAP and End of Course results.

## **The Implementation of Public Chapter 1036 and Project-Based Assessments for Civics in Tennessee**

### *What does Public Chapter 1036 require?*

Public Chapter 1036 requires that, beginning in school year 2012–13, all school districts implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades 4 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12. The law defines “project-based” as “an approach that

engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through a student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.”

The project-based assessments are to be developed by school districts and should be “designed to measure the civics learning objectives contained in the social studies curriculum and to demonstrate understanding and relevance of public policy, the structure of federal, state, and local governments, and both the Tennessee and the United States constitutions.” Districts must verify to the Tennessee Department of Education that they have implemented the provisions of the law.

The law allows the Tennessee Department of Education to seek assistance from appropriate outside entities, including the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement, to assist with professional development on the use of project-based assessments of civic learning. The General Assembly appropriated \$100,000 in funding to implement PC 1036.<sup>30</sup>

### *Why use project-based assessments for civics?*

Advocates of an increased focus on civic learning in schools suggest that three broad categories of student outcomes should be addressed:<sup>31</sup>

- civic knowledge (familiarity with government institutions),
- civic skills (analytical skills necessary to reason about public issues), and

## **The emergence of the field of Social Studies**

Following an influential National Education Association report in 1915, both civics and history were made part of the newly emerging field of “social studies.” The 1915 report is “widely believed to be the most important document in the history of citizenship education in the United States. It legitimated the term ‘social studies’ to designate formal citizenship education and placed squarely in the field all of those subjects that were believed to contribute to that end,” a format that generally has continued in public schools.

Not civics alone, but the entire group of social studies—civics, history, and economics—should have for its immediate aim the training of the good citizen. It should still further be recognized that the work of the public school in training for citizenship is not limited even to the social studies, but involves a socialized point of view for all instruction and for all school management and discipline.

Sources: Murry R. Nelson, ed., *The Social Studies in Secondary Education: A Reprint of the Seminal 1916 Report with Annotations and Commentaries*, National Council for the Social Studies, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Social Studies Development Center, 1994. United States Bureau of Education, *The Teaching of Community Civics*, Bulletin, 1915, p. 11.

- civic dispositions (participation in community affairs).

The categories are widely accepted among educators and form the basis on which the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Civics assessment was constructed. (See the pullout box titled “What Does the NAEP Civics Assessment Measure?”)

Advocates acknowledge that assessing students’ acquisition of these desired outcomes, particularly civic skills and dispositions, can be difficult. According to an analysis by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), multiple choice and short answer tests are useful measures for assessing students’ basic civics knowledge, but measuring civic skills and dispositions requires alternate forms of assessment. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, which commissioned the CIRCLE analysis, “strongly recommends states and districts utilize more authentic assessment instruments that measure students’ civic skills and dispositional growth,” in the form of portfolio, classroom-based, and performance assessments.<sup>32</sup>

#### *What is project-based learning?*

Research suggests that a single definition of project-based learning does not exist among educators, but

definitions found in several studies of project-based learning share some common characteristics:<sup>33</sup>

- student learning is organized around projects
- projects are central to the curriculum
- projects are complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems
- projects are substantially student-driven, are not wholly “teacher-led, scripted, or packaged,” and “incorporate a good deal more student autonomy, choice, unsupervised work time, and responsibility than traditional instruction and traditional projects”
- projects are realistic and result in solutions that have the potential to be implemented

An example of a project-based approach to learning is Project Citizen, a program used in some Tennessee schools for several years.<sup>34</sup> Project Citizen is overseen by the national nonprofit Center for Civic Education and is administered in Tennessee by the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement. In Project Citizen, students “work cooperatively to identify a public policy problem in their community. They then research the problem, evaluate alternative solutions, develop their own solution in the form of a public policy, and create a political action plan to enlist local or state authorities to adopt their proposed policy.” Students develop a portfolio of their work and present their project in a

### **Civics in present-day schools**

Although civic learning was seen as central to the mission of public schools from their inception, some critics believe that standards-based reform, particularly as implemented in response to the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, has resulted in less attention to civics, along with other subject areas. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools reported in a 2011 study, *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, that a minority of elementary grade teachers (slightly more than one third) say that they cover civic topics on a regular basis. The study also concluded that, in general, high schools require students to take fewer civics courses than in the past and do little to teach students about participatory democracy:

What remains is a single course on American government that usually spends little time on how people can—and why they should—participate as citizens. (While high school students are obtaining increasing numbers of credits in various social science and history electives, these courses rarely focus on what students can and should do to participate in their democracy.) The single remaining civics course is usually offered in the eleventh or twelfth grade—a move that signals that civics is an afterthought, does not allow for students to build knowledge from year to year, and completely misses the large number of students who drop out before their senior year and are most in need of education regarding their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Source: Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, 2011, p. 27, <http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/>.

public hearing setting to a panel of “civic-minded community members.”

#### *What does research say about project-based learning?*

Proponents of project-based learning cite research suggesting that “students learn more deeply and perform better on complex tasks if they have the opportunity to engage in more ‘authentic’ learning—projects and activities that require them to employ subject knowledge to solve real-world problems.”<sup>35</sup> Research has also demonstrated that students engaged in project-based learning make gains in factual learning that are equivalent to or exceed those of students who learn using more traditional classroom methods. Beyond learning facts, advocates say that project-based learning (PBL) enables “students to transfer their learning to new kinds of situations and problems and to use knowledge more proficiently in performance situations.”<sup>36</sup> There is also some evidence that the use of PBL can improve the performance of students who struggle in traditional classroom settings.<sup>37</sup>

Implementing PBL in the classroom can be challenging for educators. “Successful inquiry-based approaches require careful planning and the development of strategies for collaboration, classroom interaction, and assessment.”<sup>38</sup> To ensure that PBL is a success in the classroom, teachers need appropriate skills and knowledge to implement the approach.

Teachers need time—and a community—to support their capacity to organize sustained project work. Without this additional time and support, extended projects can easily become more about ‘doing for the sake of doing’ than

‘doing with understanding,’ the true goal of inquiry-based group work.<sup>39</sup>

#### *How will project-based learning, as required by Public Chapter 1036 for civic education, be implemented in Tennessee schools?*

Tennessee Department of Education officials acknowledge that some schools may comply only minimally with the law during the first year of implementation because training is needed for teachers who are not familiar with project-based learning. TDOE has developed and distributed materials to assist districts in meeting the law’s requirements. In a memorandum sent to district superintendents on October 2, 2012, TDOE “encourages teachers to design an authentic learning experience for students in which they will engage in the process of applying the civics concepts imbedded into the social studies standards to real-world scenarios.”<sup>40</sup> The memorandum provided districts with resources and recommendations to develop project-based assessments for grade 4 and for the U.S. Government course usually taught in grade 11.<sup>41</sup> Department officials are recommending (but not requiring) that districts and schools develop project-based civics assessments required by the new law in these grades. Exhibit 1 outlines items contained in the attachments to the TDOE memorandum to school districts: relevant learning expectations excerpted from state standards, recommendations for project components, and ideas for project contents.

### **The Tennessee General Assembly and Civic Education**

In 2006, the Tennessee General Assembly created the Commission on Civic Education in Tennessee to research current policies and practices in civic education at the state and local level as well as make recommendations of any policies and programs that would be necessary to correct and improve upon the current level of civic education in Tennessee schools. In 2007, the Commission surveyed Tennessee superintendents and principals on the state of civic education in public schools. Survey results showed that 61 percent of respondents disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or were undecided when asked if their school or district was “meeting its civic mission to create informed, active, engaged citizens.”

Source: 104<sup>th</sup> Tennessee General Assembly, Public Acts, 2006, [Chapter No. 889](#), An act to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4 and Title 49, relative to civic education, <http://www.tn.gov/sos/>. Tennessee Commission on Civic Education, *2007 Inventory of Civic Education in Tennessee Schools*, October 2007.

## **What Does the NAEP Civics Assessment Measure?**

The NAEP civics assessment measures the civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in America's constitutional democracy. The assessment is administered to students at grades 4, 8, and 12. Since its first administration in 1988, the NAEP civics assessment has been given only sporadically, but is now on a regular four-year cycle. The NAEP Civics Framework, the blueprint for the assessment, was developed by the National Assessment Governing Board and recommends that the assessment should be organized around three main components: knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. A discussion of each component follows.

### **Civic Knowledge**

The civic knowledge component draws heavily on the National Standards for Civics and Government developed by the Center for Civic Education and covers the broad range of content that forms the basis of civic understanding. It is organized into five main categories, expressed as questions.

- What are civic life, politics, and government?
- What are the foundations of the American political system?
- How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purpose, values, and principles of American democracy?
- What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
- What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

### **Intellectual Skills**

The intellectual skills component covers those skills of mind and action that allow individuals to apply civic knowledge to good effect. The framework distinguishes three skills, though they are clearly overlapping.

- identifying and describing;
- explaining and analyzing; and
- evaluating, taking, and defending positions.

### **Civic Dispositions**

The component of civic dispositions, according to the framework, "refers to the traits of private and public character essential to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy." The framework defines five dispositions as follows:

- becoming an independent member of society;
- assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen;
- respecting individual worth and human dignity;
- participating in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner; and
- promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/whatmeasure.asp>. National Center for Education Statistics, "Timeline for National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Assessments from 1969 to 2017," <http://nces.ed.gov/> (accessed Oct. 26, 2012).

**Exhibit 1: Project-based assessment resources developed by the Tennessee Department of Education for first-year implementation of P.C. 1036 (2012)**

Related Grade 4 Learning Expectations (from the Social Studies curriculum standards)	Related United States Government Learning Expectations (from the U.S. Government curriculum standards—usually taught in grade 11)
<p>4.01 Discuss the structure and purposes of governance</p> <p>4.02 Describe the Constitution of the United States and the Tennessee State Constitution in principle and practice</p> <p>4.03 Understand the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizens living in a democratic republic</p> <p>4.04 Recognize the qualities of a contributing citizen in our participatory democracy</p>	<p>4.1 Understand the role of politics and government in society</p> <p>4.2 Understand the role of constitutions in preventing abuses of government power</p> <p>6.1 Understand the impact of individual and group decisions on citizens and communities</p> <p>6.2 Understand how groups can effect change at the local, state, national, and world levels</p> <p>6.5 Understand the impact and influence of participatory citizenship on government at all levels</p>
<p><b>Recommendations for project components</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students should engage in informational texts (periodicals, speeches, texts from bills and/or laws, etc.) to identify a problem within the community, city, state, or nation.</li> <li>▪ Students should brainstorm and think critically about solutions to the identified problem based on exhibited needs. Proposed solutions should also take into consideration any services or pre-existing efforts to meet the identified need.</li> <li>▪ Students should identify their civic responsibility to the matter and actions to be taken. The project should also address the appropriate elected official as determined by the structure of governance.</li> <li>▪ Students should reflect on the outcome of the project and the responsibility held by citizens and elected officials in the process of resolving the identified problem.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Ideas for content of project</b></p>	
<p><b>Grade 4</b></p>	<p><b>U.S. Government</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write a letter to an elected official</li> <li>▪ Volunteer in the community</li> <li>▪ Organize a food or clothing drive</li> <li>▪ Join or start a civic group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a proposal to send to an elected official that will meet a specific need</li> <li>▪ Organize a civic group to volunteer time in order to serve the community</li> <li>▪ Partner with an existing organization to raise funds and/or supplies to meet needs in the community</li> </ul>

**Conclusions**

- In order to carry out the provisions of Public Chapter 1036 (2012), social studies teachers in elementary and middle schools and U.S. Government teachers in high schools may require training on the implementation of project-based assessments for their classrooms. In summer 2013, TDOE plans to conduct professional development training on Common Core literacy standards. The training will include all social studies teachers,

according to TDOE staff, and will incorporate project-based learning and assessment and how social studies teachers can apply the new Common Core literacy standards to their social studies instruction. The Common Core literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of many different subjects, including history and social studies teachers, using their content area expertise to help students meet the challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

- Under Public Chapter 1036, school districts are responsible for the development of project-based assessments and must verify the implementation of the law to the Department, but are not required to report the results of the assessments, either to the Department or publicly. Student results for the civics portion of the social studies curriculum standards will continue to be reflected and reported in TCAP social studies scores in grades 3 through 8 for each district and school.
- Social studies and U.S. Government teachers may benefit from access to classroom and lesson plan resources specifically designed for project-based assessments in civics. Groups such as the Center for Civic Education and Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement provide materials on civics instruction, including successful project-based assessment programs such as Project Citizen and We the People.

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## Endnotes

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**Appendix A: Tennessee Legislation affecting civic education, 1929 to 2012**

1929	Public Chapter 83, establishes TCA 49-6-1001(a); amended in 1999, Public Chapter 312; amended in 2002, Public Chapter 841	<b>Flag and the Pledge of Allegiance</b> – All public school students are to study the “uses, purposes and methods of displaying the American flag and other patriotic emblems.”
1947	Public Chapters 50 and 136, establishes TCA 49-6-1203; amended in 1974, Public Chapter 654	<b>Federal and state constitutions</b> – Requires all public high schools to teach students about the United States and Tennessee Constitutions.
1951	Public Chapter 30, establishes TCA 49-6-1202	<b>American history and government</b> – High school students in both public and private schools are to receive at least one year of instruction in American history and government, preferably in the fourth year.
1985	Public Chapter 296, establishes TCA 49-6-1007(a); amended in 1999, Public Chapter 369; amended in 2008, Public Chapter 865	<b>Character Education</b> – Requires all public schools to include “character education to help each student develop positive values and to improve student conduct as students learn to act in harmony with their positive values and learn to become good citizens in their school, community and society.”
1993	Public Chapter 116, establishes TCA 49-6-1011	<b>Use of historical documents, writings, and records in classrooms</b> – Ensures that teachers may not be prohibited from using or reading from, or posting in a school building or classroom historically significant documents such as, but not limited to, the National Anthem, the Constitution of Tennessee, the Declaration of Independence, among others. The statute clarifies that the use of these and other historically significant documents are to be “undertaken for educational purposes only and shall not be used to promote or establish any religion or religious belief.”
1999	Public Chapter 312, amends TCA 49-6-1001(a); amended in 2002, Public Chapter 841	<b>Flag and the Pledge of Allegiance</b> – Requires public school students to study the “history and usage of the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.”
1999	Public Chapter 369, amends TCA 49-6-1007; amended in 2004, Public Chapter 919; amended in 2008, Public Chapter 865	<b>Character Education</b> – Requires the Department of Education to report annually to the Senate and House Education Committees on the number of schools in which character education was an integral part of the curriculum in the most recent academic year, the number of students receiving character education in the most recent academic year, a sample teaching method of character education used in the most recent academic year, and a summary of the effectiveness of the teaching methods.
2002	Public Chapter 841, amends TCA 49-6-1001	<b>Flag and the Pledge of Allegiance</b> – Requires “daily recitation of the pledge of allegiance in each classroom in the school system in which a flag is displayed,” and exempts students and teachers from the requirement for religious, philosophical, or other grounds.

2004	Public Chapter 919, amends TCA 49-6-1007(d); amended in 2008, Public Chapter 865	<b>Character Education</b> – Requires the Department of Education to recognize those schools that have developed model instructional methods and administrative policies for the delivery of character education and provide professional development opportunities for the dissemination of those “best practices” to LEAs statewide.
2006	Public Chapter 889, amends Title 49 (constituted TCA 49-6-1501 – 49-6-1506, which was deleted by the code commission in 2009)	<b>Commission on Civic Education</b> – Establishes the Commission on Civic Education with the mission of researching current policies and practices in civic education at the state and local levels, as well as recommending to policymakers policies and programs that could improve the practice of civic education in Tennessee schools. The commission was to convene no more than six months after the effective date of the act, and meet no fewer than four times in the year thereafter.
2008	Public Chapter 865, amends TCA 49-6-1007(a)	<b>Character Education</b> – Urges public schools to include use of nonviolence as a means of conflict resolution within character education.
2010	Public Chapter 855, amends TCA 49-6-1028; amended in 2011, Public Chapters 293 and 372; amended in 2012, Public Chapter 1036	<b>Public school courses</b> – Urges local boards of education to “...include, at some appropriate grade level or levels in high school... courses and content designed to educate children in the United States government. The goal of the curriculum shall include the three branches of government, the fundamental documents that underpin our form of government, an understanding of how laws are enacted, and ways citizens shape and influence government and governmental actions.”
2011	Public Chapter 293, amends TCA 49-6-1028; amended in 2011, Public Chapter 372; amended in 2012, Public Chapter 1036	<b>Public school courses</b> – Directs the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Education, to review the curriculum standards for civics education to determine whether the course of instruction in all public schools is designed to effectively and rigorously educate children about local, state, and federal government. Findings were to be reported to the education committees of the house and senate education committees in January 2012.
2011	Public Chapter 372, amends TCA 49-6-1028; amended in 2012, Public Chapter 1036	<b>Public school courses</b> – Directs the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Education, to review the curriculum standards for Tennessee and United States Government. The State Board of Education is directed to analyze the teaching of foundational instruments, including the Declaration of Independence, the constitutions of Tennessee and the United States, and the Bill of Rights, and values of Tennessee and American government. Findings were to be reported to the education committees of the house and senate education committees by February 1, 2012.

2012

**Public Chapter 1036, amends 49-6-1028**

**Public school courses** – Requires LEAs to implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades 4 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12. The assessments shall be designed by the LEA in line with current social studies curriculum standards. Authorizes the Department of Education to seek assistance from “appropriate outside entities, including the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement, to assist it with the implementation of any necessary professional development on the use of project-based assessments of civic learning.” LEAs are to submit yearly “verification of implementation” documents to the Department of Education.

## Appendix B: Efforts to strengthen civic engagement of youth

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Over the last several years, a variety of civic-related groups, federal and state entities, and concerned individuals have attempted to focus public attention on the need to strengthen civic engagement in the U.S., particularly among young people. The messages they have dispensed appear to be well-received and applauded, yet little seems to have changed with regard to civic education in schools.

Some notable examples of these efforts include:

- The National Conference of State Legislatures adopted a 1998 resolution urging state legislatures to “promote civic education on representative democracy.”
- *The Civic Mission of Schools*, a 2003 joint report from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Citing a “common interest in increasing youth civic engagement but no common ground as to how to do this effectively,” CIRCLE and the Carnegie Corporation convened a group of experts in 2002 to ferret out “rigorous evidence” that would lead to sound recommendations about effective civic education strategies. Among the recommendations was an appeal to “provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.”
- Twenty-two national civic education groups, with support from the Judicial Conference Judicial Branch Committee, passed a resolution in 2003 calling for civic education to be a high priority in U.S. schools. Part of the effort was to involve interested judges as resource persons available to educators and leaders concerned with social studies, civics, law-related education, and American history.
- The founding of iCivics, an educational website, by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor in 2009. Justice O’Connor described as her purpose “to reverse Americans’ declining civic knowledge and participation. Securing our democracy, she realized, requires teaching the next generation to understand and respect our system of governance.” The organization includes a national leadership team of state supreme court justices, secretaries of state, and educational leaders and a network of volunteers. The iCivics website contains 16 educational video games and teaching materials that have been used in classrooms in all 50 states, as well as a comprehensive, standards-aligned civics curriculum available at no charge online.
- In 2010, the American Bar Association announced a national civic education initiative with the inaugural meeting of the ABA Commission on Civic Education in the Nation’s Schools. The commission’s mission is to shape and guide the ABA’s long-term efforts to encourage lawyers to ensure that all students experience high-quality civic learning.
- *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, a 2011 report from the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a project of the Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania. The report recommends that policymakers include civic learning in state assessments and accountability measures; use alternative forms of assessments such as group projects and activities or portfolio assessments, which “are better suited to assessing student achievement in civic learning than traditional ‘paper and pencil tests’; and require and support high-quality, ongoing professional development for social studies and civic learning teachers.
- *Fault Lines in Our Democracy: Civic Knowledge, Voting Behavior, and Civic Engagement in the United States*, a 2012 report from the Educational Testing Service. The report noted the strong link between individual characteristics, such as age, education, and income, and civic engagement activities, such as voting. The report recommended improving the civic knowledge of potential future voters, expanding the NAEP assessment of civic knowledge to provide data by state, and improving graduation rates, since more education generally means a more involved citizen.
- *Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action*, a 2012 report from the U.S. Department of Education. The report highlights nine steps the U.S. Department of Education plans to take to advance civic learning and democratic engagement, including adding civic indicators to national student surveys, promoting public service internships and careers, and leveraging federal programs and public-private partnerships. AmeriCorps is singled out in the report as a leading example of civic learning, and service-learning is discussed as an effective practice in promoting civic learning.

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**Appendix C: Tennessee TCAP Achievement Results by Subject and Grade, Grades 3–8, and End of Course Results by Subject, Grades 9–12**

**Tennessee TCAP Achievement Results by Subject and Grade, Grades 3–8**

Year	Grade	Social Studies	Reading/Language Arts	Math	Science
		% P/A	% P/A	% P/A	% P/A
2012	3-8	82.9	49.9	47.3	60.5
2011	3-8	80.7	47.5	41.0	54.9
2010	3-8	79.9	44.8	34.6	51.9
2012	3	82.2	45.9	55.0	66.5
2011	3	80.8	43.4	51.1	61.2
2010	3	79.8	42.3	48.0	61.3
2012	4	84.1	47.5	43.2	53.7
2011	4	83.7	43.2	38.0	46.3
2010	4	83.7	42.2	34.5	45.1
2012	5	84.7	57.1	54.1	59.5
2011	5	83.2	51.8	45.9	53.5
2010	5	82.7	48.1	35.6	51.6
2012	6	85.4	55.6	42.7	60.3
2011	6	82.5	54.4	38.4	52.9
2010	6	81.6	51.3	31.1	49.0
2012	7	80.6	46.2	45.0	59.5
2011	7	76.8	44.8	35.8	55.6
2010	7	77.0	42.4	28.5	49.6
2012	8	80.3	47.2	43.5	63.3
2011	8	76.0	47.2	36.2	59.9
2010	8	74.4	42.4	29.3	54.6

% P/A = Percent Proficient or Advanced

**Tennessee End of Course Results by Subject, Grades 9–12**

Year	US History	English I	English II	Algebra I	Algebra II	Biology
	% P/A	% P/A	% P/A	% P/A	% P/A	% P/A
2012	95.3	66.1	60.7	55.4	33.3	55.8
2011	95.6	66.3	58.1	46.9	30.8	52.0
2010	96.5	61.3	59.6	41.2	n/a	53.8

% P/A = Percent Proficient or Advanced

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, "2012 Statewide TCAP and End of Course Results," <http://www.tn.gov/education/> (accessed December 4, 2012).



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