



## Civic Learning in Grades 1-8: Creating Pathways for the State Seal of Civic Engagement

**Purpose:** Require public school districts to establish pathways for civic education in grades 1-8. In addition, requires civic learning resources and support for teachers to set specific learning objectives for students, including understanding the Constitution and actively engaging with democratic institutions at least once in grades 1-6 and once in grades 7-8.

### Background

In October 2017, then-Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 24 into law. The law required the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to recommend to the State Board of Education (SBE) criteria for awarding a State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE) to pupils who have demonstrated excellence in civic education and participation and an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government.

On September 10, 2020, the SBE adopted criteria and guidance to award a State Seal of Civic Engagement to California students in public schools, grades 11 and 12, who demonstrate excellence in civics education and participation, including an understanding of the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the democratic system of government.

According to the law, it is the intent of the Legislature to establish a State Seal of Civic Engagement to encourage and create pathways for pupils in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels.

However, there currently is no requirement for elementary and middle schools to establish a pathway for students to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions in order to prepare them to meet the criteria to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement in grades 11 or 12.

### Benefits

To promote civic engagement by encouraging and establishing pathways for elementary and secondary school pupils to actively participate in democratic governmental institutions at various levels. Additionally, this would underscore the need for earlier preparation in elementary and middle schools, creating a foundation for students to meet the criteria for the SSCE in later grades.

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## CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2023–2024 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO. 1094

**Introduced by Senator Limón  
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Pellerin)**

February 12, 2024

An act to amend Sections 51210 and 51220 of the Education Code, relating to pupil instruction.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1094, as introduced, Limón. Pupil instruction: course of study: social sciences: civic engagement.

Existing law requires the adopted course of study for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, and the adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to include certain areas of study, including, among others, social sciences. Existing law requires instruction in social sciences to provide a foundation for understanding, among other things, the history, resources, development, and government of California and the United States of America.

This bill, with respect to both of the above-referenced adopted courses of study, would explicitly require instruction in social sciences to also include principles of democracy and the State and Federal Constitutions. The bill would also require pupils, at least once while in either grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, and at least once while in either grade 7 or 8, to complete one civic engagement or experience with a governmental institution at the local, state, or national level, as provided. To the extent that this bill would create new duties for local educational agencies or local officials, it would constitute a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

### Digest Key

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

### Bill Text

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS  
FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** (a) The Legislature finds and declares that all students, regardless of their background, must have a comprehensive understanding of democratic institutions in order to become active participants in their communities and their government.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to create pathways for pupils in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels, and to provide civic learning resources and support for teachers to implement programming that will create these pathways.

**SEC. 2.** Section 51210 of the Education Code is amended to read:

**51210.** (a) The adopted course of study for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, shall include instruction, beginning in grade 1 and continuing through grade 6, in the following areas of study:

(1) English, including knowledge of, and appreciation for, literature and the language, as well as the skills of speaking, reading, listening, spelling, handwriting, including instruction in cursive or joined italics in the appropriate grade levels, and composition.

(2) Mathematics, including concepts, operational skills, and problem solving.

(3) *(A)* Social sciences, drawing upon the disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, designed to fit the maturity of the pupils. Instruction shall provide a foundation for understanding the history, resources, development, and government of California and the United States of ~~America~~; *America, including principles of democracy and the State and Federal Constitutions*; the development of the American economic system, including the role of the entrepreneur and labor; the relations of persons to their human and natural environment; eastern and western cultures and civilizations; contemporary issues; and the wise use of natural resources.

*(B) In addition to the instruction received pursuant to subparagraph (A), a pupil shall complete a civic engagement or experience with a governmental institution at the local, state, or national level at least once while in either grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, as determined by the governing board.*

(4) Science, including the biological and physical aspects, with emphasis on the processes of experimental inquiry, on the place of humans in ecological systems, on the causes and effects of climate change, and on the methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Appropriate coursework including material on the causes and effects of climate change and methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change shall be offered to pupils as soon as possible, commencing no later than the 2024–25 school year.

(5) Visual and performing arts, including instruction in the subjects of dance, music, theater, and visual arts, aimed at the development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

(6) Health, including instruction in the principles and practices of individual, family, and community health.

(7) Physical education, with emphasis upon the physical activities for the pupils that may be conducive to health and vigor of body and mind, for a total period of time of not less than 200 minutes each 10 schooldays, excluding recesses and the lunch period.

(8) Other studies that the governing board may prescribe.

(b) (1) A complaint that a school district or county superintendent of schools has not complied with the instructional minute requirements of paragraph (7) of subdivision (a) may be filed with a school district or county superintendent of schools pursuant to the Uniform Complaint Procedures set forth in Chapter 5.1 (commencing with Section 4600) of Division 1 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.

(2) A complainant not satisfied with the decision of a school district or county superintendent of schools may appeal the decision to the department pursuant to Chapter 5.1 (commencing with Section 4600) of Division 1 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations and shall receive a written appeal decision within 60 days of the department's receipt of the appeal.

(3) If a school district or county superintendent of schools finds merit in a complaint, or the Superintendent finds merit in an appeal, the school district or county superintendent of schools shall provide a remedy to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians.

(c) The Legislature finds and declares that neither the original provisions of this section, nor any subsequent amendments to it, were intended to create a private right of action. However, nothing in this subdivision shall restrict or expand the existing right of any party to seek relief from noncompliance with this section pursuant to a writ of mandate.

**SEC. 3.** Section 51220 of the Education Code is amended to read:

51220. The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall offer courses in the following areas of study:

(a) English, including knowledge of and appreciation for literature, language, and composition, and the skills of reading, listening, and speaking.

(b) (1) (A) Social sciences, drawing upon the disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology, designed to fit the maturity of the pupils. Instruction shall provide a foundation for understanding the history, resources, development, and government of California and the United States of ~~America~~; *America, including principles of democracy and the State and Federal Constitutions*; instruction in our American legal system, the operation of the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, and the rights and duties of citizens under the criminal and civil law and the State and Federal Constitutions; the development of the American economic system, including the role of the entrepreneur and labor; the relations of persons to their human and natural environment; eastern and western cultures and civilizations; human rights issues, with particular attention to the study of the inhumanity of genocide, slavery, and the Holocaust; and contemporary issues.

*(B) In addition to the instruction received pursuant to subparagraph (A), a pupil shall complete a civic engagement or experience with a governmental institution at the local, state, or national level at least once while in either grade 7 or 8, as determined by the governing board.*

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, genocide may include the Armenian Genocide. The "Armenian Genocide" means the torture, starvation, and murder of 1,500,000 Armenians, which included death marches into the Syrian desert, by the rulers of the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the exile of more than 500,000 innocent people during the period from 1915 to 1923, inclusive.

(c) World language or languages, beginning not later than grade 7, designed to develop a facility for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the particular language.

(d) Physical education, with emphasis given to physical activities that are conducive to health and to vigor of body and mind, as required by Section 51222.

(e) Science, including the physical and biological aspects, with emphasis on basic concepts, theories, and processes of scientific investigation, on the place of humans in ecological systems, on the causes and effects of climate change, on the methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and with appropriate applications of the interrelation and interdependence of the sciences. Appropriate coursework including material on the causes and effects of climate change and methods to mitigate and adapt to climate change shall be offered to pupils as soon as possible, commencing no later than the 2024–25 school year.

- (f) Mathematics, including instruction designed to develop mathematical understandings, operational skills, and insight into problem solving procedures.
- (g) Visual and performing arts, including dance, music, theater, and visual arts, with emphasis upon development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.
- (h) Applied arts, including instruction in the areas of consumer education, family and consumer sciences education, industrial arts, general business education, or general agriculture.
- (i) Career technical education designed and conducted for the purpose of preparing youth for gainful employment in the occupations and in the numbers that are appropriate to the personnel needs of the state and the community served and relevant to the career desires and needs of the pupils.
- (j) Automobile driver education, designed to develop a knowledge of the Vehicle Code and other laws of this state relating to the operation of motor vehicles, a proper acceptance of personal responsibility in traffic, a true appreciation of the causes, seriousness, and consequences of traffic accidents, and the knowledge and attitudes necessary for the safe operation of motor vehicles. A course in automobile driver education shall include education in the safe operation of motorcycles.
- (k) Other studies that the governing board may prescribe.

**SEC. 4.** If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.