



The Foundation for Florida's Future

SUPPORTS

HB 105 Relating to Middle School Civics Education Assessment by Rep. McBurney

The Foundation asks that you vote **YES** on HB 105 by Rep. McBurney in the Education Policy Council on February 17th. The initiative increases standards by implementing a civics end-of-course exam that all middle school students will be required to take.

The study of civics provides students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to prepare them to be effective and responsible citizens.

Testing gets results

This legislation raises the bar by requiring all Florida middle school students to take a civics end-of-course exam that will count as 30 percent of their final grade in the first year of implementation. Starting with the second year the test is administered, the student must pass the exam to pass the civics course. This is the beginning of the Department of Education's gradual move to end-of-course exams as assessment testing.

Increasing standards will better prepare our children for college and the workforce. Florida's rising student achievement is a result of a system based on high standards and accountability. This proposed committee substitute takes another step to continue this progress.

Elevating Social Studies

In 2009, U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander (R –TN), Robert Byrd (D – W.VA), and the late Ted Kennedy (D – MA) introduced a bipartisan bill to improve federal funding for higher standards and enhanced social science teaching.

"The future success of the American experiment depends on today's youth having the knowledge to understand our past and learn from it."

- Edward "Ted" Kennedy

A 2005 Florida Bar statewide survey of adult civic awareness provided the following evidence of the need for increased social science education:

- Only 59% of Florida adults could correctly identify the three branches of U.S. government
- Only 46% of Florida adults could correctly describe the meaning of "separation of powers"
- Only 61% of Florida adults could correctly describe the meaning of "checks and balances"

A recent statewide survey of 1,650 elementary teachers, conducted by the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors, found that more than two-thirds of Florida's elementary school teachers report spending two hours or less on Social Studies (History, Civics/Government, Economics and Geography) per week. Only 2.5% of teachers find the time to spend as much as five hours per week.

Florida's assessment system began in the early 90's, with writing exams administered in 1992, math and reading exams introduced in 1997 and then expanded in 2000. Science exams were added in 2003. Now is the time to take a step toward adding social studies to our assessment system. Civics is an integral part of a balanced curriculum to prepare young people to be effective participants in America's democratic system.

If you have any questions, please contact Adam Peshek, Policy Analyst, at (850) 298-8571 or adam@afloridapromise.org.

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