

KEY MESSAGE / FAQ GUIDE CIVICS COURSE MANDATE

Lead external messaging document includes key messages and Frequently Asked Questions regarding the new civics course requirement and statewide implementation efforts.

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Key Messages: Civics Course Overview

- Educating the next generation of citizens was historically a central mission of our schools.
- The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and other statewide corporate and philanthropic organizations have been working to ensure this is a priority again by leading a successful effort to bring civics back to Illinois schools.
- In August 2015, Public Act 099-0434 became a law requiring future Illinois high school students complete a semester-long civics course.
- The civic course mandate was based on a recommendation from the Illinois Task Force for Civic Education established by the General Assembly, to study the status of civic education in Illinois and provide recommendations on how to improve it (See Q3).
- Before this mandate passed, Illinois was one of only eleven states that did not have a civic education graduation requirement (See Q4).
- The new civics course requirement states that all Illinois high schools are required to offer a semester-long civics course that includes instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning, and simulations of democratic processes.
- The new requirement takes effect on July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshmen for the 2016-2017 school year.
- It is recommended that the course be offered during a student's junior or senior year; however, when the class is offered is determined by each individual school (See Q6).
- Responsibility for statewide implementation lies with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), its Regional Offices of Education, individual school districts, and ultimately high schools and teachers within them (See Q15)
- The Implementation Campaign includes three central elements (1) statewide implementation of the high school civics course, (2) integration of the new Illinois Social Science Standards addressing civics, and (3) addressing the teacher training pipeline from college to classrooms.
- To ensure adequate support and funding for professional development and classroom resources, the corporate and philanthropic communities created a public-private partnership that has committed at least \$1 million annually for a three years.

- Implementation will be managed by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and includes support from such organizations as the All-State Corporation, Boeing Corporation, Chicago Community Trust, Joyce Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Spencer Foundation.
- To learn more about the new civics course requirement and to access resources and support visit IllinoisCivics.org.

Key Messages: Funding

- The mandate was passed with overwhelming bi-partisan support from the Illinois General Assembly and finally signed by Governor Rauner in August 2015 (See Q8).
- After the mandate was passed, several organizations made a commitment to ensure there was adequate support and funding for implementation including professional development activities and classroom resources.
- Funding will be managed by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation with support from organizations including All-State Corporation, Boeing Corporation, Chicago Community Trust, Joyce Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Spencer Foundation.
- These organizations collectively committed at least \$1 million annually for the next three years to support implementation efforts through 2018.
- At the end of the three-year implementation period, civics teachers throughout Illinois will have accessed in-person and online professional development and classroom resources intended to build their capacity to meet the mandate.
- The McCormick Foundation has long supported this work and will likely continue to do so. Current and prospective funding partners are encouraged to join us in our ongoing efforts to strengthen the state's civic education system.
- To learn more about the new civics course mandate and how you can support this effort visit IllinoisCivics.org.

Key Messages: Course Implementation

- The objective in passing this mandate has always been clear, to create a better environment to empower tomorrow's voters and community members.

- In August 2015, Public Act 099-0434 became a law requiring future Illinois high school students complete a semester-long civics course.
- Before the mandate was passed, Illinois was one of only eleven states that didn't require a stand-alone semester long civic education course for graduation (See Q4).
- The new civics course requirement goes into effect on July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshman for the 2016-2017 school year.
- Responsibility for statewide implementation lies with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), its Regional Offices of Education, individual school districts, and ultimately high schools and teachers within them (See Q15)
- The implementation includes three central elements (1) statewide implementation of the high school civics course, (2) integration of the new Illinois Social Science Standards addressing civics, and (3) establishing a teacher training pipeline from college to classrooms.
- The new requirement is intended to close the civic empowerment gap that currently exists in Illinois, and provide resources and support to schools most in need of services.
- Currently, 60% of Illinois schools *already* require a civics or government course for graduation.
- An additional 27% of Illinois high schools offer a civics or government course but do not require it. The remaining 13% of schools either have no existing course or their curricular offerings in this subject area are not known.
- To best serve the schools most in need of resources and support, all public high schools are welcome to access the in-person and [online](#) professional development and classroom resources offered over the course of the three-year implementation period (See Q28).
- Additionally, a teacher mentor program is in development to provide direct support to schools and educators (See Q25).
- To learn more about the implementation efforts visit IllinoisCivics.org.

Key Messages: Professional Development and Support

- An important element for course implementation is to provide direct support to schools without an existing course and offer top-notch professional development opportunities for teachers and schools statewide.



- Regional professional development workshops and ongoing supports are being designed in response to needs assessment data. Workshop staples will include content and trainings consistent with the new course mandate. Workshops will be held regionally at partner sites located in ISBE Regions I-VI (1-6) beginning in summer 2016.
- In line with best practices in teacher professional development, summer institutes and inservices will be content-focused, connected to teachers' daily classroom experiences, collaborative in nature, and continuous.
- The ICMC will also launch a civic education teacher mentor program. Forty teacher mentors will be recruited statewide and responsible for providing guidance on course implementation for *all* teachers, schools and districts in their assigned region.
- The teacher mentors' primary responsibility will be to provide direct support to schools with no current course requirement. Throughout the year, these mentors will also facilitate professional development workshops, visit classrooms and connect teachers and schools to resources.
- Additionally IllinoisCivics.org is being developed to act as a portal for administrators, teachers, students, and parents to access course information, implementation requirements, classroom resources, mentor information and professional development offerings.
- To learn more about teacher support and professional development opportunities visit IllinoisCivics.org.

FAQs: Civics Course Overview

Q1: What is the new civics course mandate?

A1: The new civics course mandate (Public Act 099-0434) is a law that requires future Illinois high school students to complete a semester-long civics course. Course content must include instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning, and simulations of democratic processes. The course requirement takes effect on July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshmen for the 2016-2017 school year.

Q2: What must a semester-long civics course include to address the best practices specified in the legislation?

A2: Course content must include instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning, and simulations of democratic processes.

Q3: Why was this civics course mandate introduced?

A3: The mandate was based on a recommendation from the Illinois Task Force for Civic Education, established by the General Assembly, to study the status of civic education in Illinois and provide recommendations on how to improve it. Before this requirement was passed, Illinois was one of only eleven states that did not have a civic education graduation requirement, and as a result, many students left high school without the knowledge, skills necessary for informed and effective engagement in our democracy.

Q4: What are the ten other states that don't require a civics course?

A4: The ten states include Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Q5: What percentage of Illinois high schools currently have a civics course graduation requirement?

A5: Based on our research, 60% of Illinois public schools currently require at least one semester of a stand-alone civics and/or government course. An additional 27% of Illinois high schools offer a civics and/or government course but do not require it. The remaining 13% of schools either have no existing course or their curricular offerings in this subject area are not known. This new mandate will close the civic empowerment gap that currently exists in Illinois.

Q6: What grade(s) is recommended for this course be taught?

A6: It is recommended that the course be offered for juniors or seniors. According to analyses of student achievement on the last four iterations of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics (1988, 1998, 2006 and 2010), students that took civics or government courses as juniors and seniors demonstrated higher levels of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions than those enrolled in these classes as freshmen or sophomores. These findings may be explained by the immediacy of adult civic engagement for upperclassmen and also the proximity of the course exposure to the assessment.

Q7: Who sponsored the initial legislation?

A7: Representative Deborah Conroy (D-Villa Park) and Senator Tom Cullerton (D-Villa Park).

Q8: What was the vote count in the Illinois House and the Senate?

A8: The initial legislation was passed with overwhelming bi-partisan support in the Illinois Legislature. It was passed by the House with a vote of 81-29 and the Senate with a vote of 46-7.

FAQs: Funding

Q9: Is this an unfunded mandate?

A9: No. To ensure adequate support for implementation including professional development activities and classroom resources, the corporate and philanthropic communities created a public-private partnership that has committed at least \$1 million annually for three years. This effort will be managed by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation with support from other interested organizations.

Q10: Who is involved in the public-private partnership?

A10: Implementation efforts will be managed by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and includes support from Allstate Corporation, Boeing Corporation, Chicago Community Trust, Joyce Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Spencer Foundation.

Q11: How will the mandate be funded after the three-year implementation period?

A11: At the end of the three-year implementation period, civics teachers throughout Illinois will have accessed in-person and online professional development and classroom resources intended to build their capacity to meet the mandate. Ongoing support will be critical, as will similar opportunities for pre-service teachers. The

McCormick Foundation has long supported this work and will likely continue to do so. Current and prospective funding partners are encouraged to join us in our ongoing efforts to strengthen the state's civic education system.

FAQs: Course Implementation

Q12: When does the civics course requirement take effect?

A12: The requirement takes effect on July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshman for the 2016-2017 school year.

Q13: How is House Bill (HB) 800 related to the civics legislation?

A13: House Bill (HB) 800 is a separate bill that clarifies the implementation date of the new course. HB 800 passed the Illinois Legislature and was signed by Governor Rauner in November 2015.

Q14: Who is responsible for implementation efforts?

A14: Responsibility for statewide implementation of a high school civics course lies with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), its Regional Offices of Education, individual school districts, and ultimately high schools and teachers within them. Central to this implementation effort is the need for teacher professional development opportunities and access to classroom resources. The mandate specifies that "School districts may utilize private funding available for the purposes of offering civics education."

Q15: What role will each of those organizations have within the implementation process?

A15: *Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)* is responsible for interpreting the course requirement; ensuring that districts are in compliance with it; and establishing new learning standards for social science, which will include guidance on civics course instruction and content.

Regional Office of Education is responsible for hosting and promoting professional development opportunities for teachers, schools, and districts in Illinois.

Individual School Districts are responsible for ensuring that high schools offer a semester-long civics course embedded with proven civic learning practices including direct instruction, discussion, service-learning, and simulations.

Teachers are responsible for designing and teaching semester-long civics course embedded with proven civic learning practices.

Q16: Is the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in full support of this legislation?

A16: While ISBE was neutral during the legislative process, they are responsible for interpreting the new course requirement, ensuring that districts are in compliance with it, and establishing guidance on course content and instruction through the new Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science.

Q17: What does the implementation strategy encompass?

A17: The plan includes three central elements: (1) implementation of the new high school civics course, (2) integration of the new Illinois Social Science Standards addressing civics, and (3) addressing the teacher training pipeline from college to classrooms. Each element will include an ongoing evaluation.

Q18: Is there a formal name for the statewide implementation campaign?

A18: Yes, #CivicsIsBack.

Q19: Explain the new Social Studies Standards.

A19: Among the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education was a call for revisions to the current Illinois Social Science Standards, last updated in 1997, with guidance from the National Council for the Social Studies College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. On August 27, 2014 the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) instructed the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, convened by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, to create and lead a task force in partnership with the Midwest Comprehensive Center at American Institutes for Research and deliver new social studies standards for ISBE's consideration by June 2015 (continue to next page).

The Social Science Standards Revision Task Force was comprised primarily of classroom practitioners representative of the various social studies disciplines, grade bands, and geographic regions of Illinois. A number of Illinois-based universities and social studies organizations also were represented on the task force. The Illinois Social Science Standards are designed to ensure that students across Illinois focus on a common set of standards and have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary for success in college, career, and civic life in the 21st century. The vision supporting this design is to produce Illinois graduates who are civically engaged, socially responsible, culturally aware, and financially literate.

Q20: What do the new Standards have to do with the new civics course requirement?

A20: The new Illinois Social Science Standards contain a civics strand across the K-12 continuum. The grade-banded strand for high school will help inform the design, teaching and learning, and student outcomes in the newly required civics course.

Q21: Is Illinois modeling their implementation efforts on other states? What results have been achieved in those states?

A21: Florida provides a useful model. In order to implement the Sandra Day O'Connor Civic Learning Act of 2010, Florida created the Joint Center on Citizenship, a partnership between the Bob Graham Center at the University of Florida and the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida. The Joint Center was endowed by the state of Florida with \$7 million and receives recurring appropriations of \$400,000 annually for teacher professional development aligned with a required 7th grade civics course. The Joint Center's early stand-alone professional development offerings were poorly subscribed, so they turned instead to a school district organized model where social studies supervisors request the services of the Joint Center and subsequently recruit teachers to attend their workshops. On the 2014 statewide test, 61% of Florida students achieved proficiency in civics, compared to 23% of middle school students nationally in the most recent NAEP Civics Assessment.

Q22: Do some Illinois high schools already have this graduation requirement?

A22: Before this mandate had passed, Illinois required that high school students successfully complete two years of social studies. The requirement stated that one year must be dedicated to U.S. history, or a combination of U.S. history and government. Although many high schools (60%) do require that students take a civics course, the state never mandated it until now. The new requirement states that one semester of those two years of social studies to be dedicated to a semester-long, stand-alone civics course.

Q23: Have the schools that do not have an existing civic course been identified? If not, how will you go about identifying those schools?

A23: Based upon a scan of the Illinois Public School Directory, 60% of Illinois public high schools currently require at least one semester of civics and/ or government in order to graduate. An additional 27% of Illinois public high schools offer (but do not require) a course that can be categorized as civics or government. Thirteen percent have no existing course or their curricular offerings in this subject area are unknown.

Q24: If those schools have been identified, where are they located?

A24: Schools without a required civics course are distributed throughout the state, but the highest concentration is in the City of Chicago (96% of CPS high schools do not require civics or government). This percentage drops significantly in suburban Chicago (37.6% without) and in Illinois' other regions (Northwest: 16.8%; West Central: 25.3%; East Central: 26.9%; Southwest: 24.3%; and Southeast: 26.0%).

Q25: What is being done to provide teachers with the appropriate skills to effectively administer the new course?

A25: Forty teacher mentors will be recruited statewide to provide ongoing engagement and support for teachers, schools, and districts in their assigned region throughout the school year. Outside of formal training opportunities, a mentor *may* also help by:

- Serving as a point of contact by phone and email for teachers in need of additional guidance;
- Attending and presenting at local professional development workshops and teacher in-services; and
- Arranging classroom visits (hosting and/ or attending to provide constructive feedback).

Q26: Is anything being done to equip incoming teachers with the skills to effectively teach these new course requirements?

A26: Part of the implementation plan is to address the teacher training pipeline from college to classroom and incorporate an evaluation plan of this effort.

Q27: Do existing American government courses satisfy the civics course requirement?

A27: Yes, with two caveats. First, qualifying government courses must address the content specified in the law, including instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning, and simulations of democratic processes. Second, this course must be offered in addition to the existing one-credit U.S. history and/or government requirement.

FAQs: Professional Development and Support

Q28: What is the plan for serving schools most in need of resources and training?

A28: Teachers at all public high schools are welcome to access the in-person and online professional development and classroom resources offered over the course of the three-year implementation period. They will be able to access resource and support through IllinoisCivics.org. Additionally, a teacher mentor program is being developed to provide direct support to schools and educators. Forty teacher mentors will be recruited statewide and responsible for providing guidance on course implementation in their assigned region. The mentors' primary responsibility will be providing direct support to schools with no current course requirement, facilitating professional development workshops, visiting classrooms and connecting teachers and schools to resources and best practices.

Q29: How can I find out about in-person and online resources?

A29: Visit IllinoisCivics.org for the latest information on training and other resources. The Calendar will provide opportunities statewide for in-person training in all 6 ISBE regions. Additional information, best practices and mentoring information is available throughout the site.

Q30: How can I find a mentor?

A30: Visit IllinoisCivics.org and click on "Find a Mentor" to find a mentor near you. A list of regional mentors will be available after July 1, 2016.

Q31: Where can educators and schools go to ensure that their course falls within the appropriate guidelines of the mandate?

A31: For additional information on the civics course requirement, supports and resources visit IllinoisCivics.org.

Q32: Do existing American government courses satisfy the civics course requirement?

A32: Yes, with two caveats. First, qualifying government courses must address the content specified in the law, including instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning, and simulations of democratic processes. Second, this course must be offered in addition to the existing one-credit U.S. history and/or government requirement.

Q33: Is anything being done to equip incoming teachers with the skills to effectively teach these new course requirements?

A33: Part of the implementation plan is to address the teacher training pipeline from college to classroom and incorporate an evaluation plan of this effort.

Q34: What are the qualifications for becoming a teacher mentor?

A34: Mentors must have at least three years of experience teaching civics or government at the high school level in Illinois. This experience should include proficiency with instruction on government institutions, current and controversial issues discussions, service-learning and simulations of democratic processes. Both current and retired teachers will be considered.

Q35: How do I apply to become a mentor?

A35: The mentor application process for 2016 closed on March 1, 2016

Q36: Who was involved in the selection process?

A36: Mentor applications will be reviewed by McCormick Foundation staff. They will contact references and later notify successful applicants of their selection.

Q37: How many teacher mentors will be selected statewide?

A37: There will be forty (40) mentors in total. Teacher mentors will be recruited from each region (one per Regional Office of Education including Cook County's three regional office centers) and assigned to schools.

Q38: Is classroom teaching required in order to be a mentor?

A38: Mentors must have at least three years of experience teaching civics or government at the high school level in Illinois. Both current and retired teachers will be considered.

Q39: What is the time commitment of a teacher mentors?

A39: Teacher mentors will be *required* to:

- Attend a four-day training session in Normal, IL on June 6-9, 2016 (hotel and meal expenses will be paid, and mileage for travel to and from reimbursed);
- Co-facilitate a two-day regional training workshop in your area (June or July 2016; specific dates to be determined) in partnership with the institutional host and lead teacher mentor;

- Serve as a mentor for teachers, schools, and districts located within your assigned Regional Office of Education;
- Participate in monthly check-in phone calls led by McCormick Foundation staff in partnership with the lead teacher mentor; and
- Complete and submit a year-end report of mentorship activities.
- Teacher mentors *may* also be responsible for:
 - Serving as a point of contact for teachers in need of additional guidance on course implementation;
 - Attending or presenting at local professional development workshops and teacher in-service trainings;
 - Classroom visits (hosting and/ or attending to provide constructive feedback); and
 - Participating in our online teacher network.

Q40: Do mentors get paid? If so, how much?

A40: Yes. \$2,000 annually, with two installments of \$1,000 paid upon completion of responsibilities on August 1, 2016, and June 1, 2017.

Q41: If selected as a teacher mentor, will I be required to go through a training? If so, were will those trainings be held?

A41: Mentors are required to complete a four-day training in Normal, Illinois on June 6-9, 2016 (hotel and meal expenses will be paid, and mileage for travel to and from reimbursed).

Q42: If chosen to be a teacher mentor, is there an expiration date or am a mentor until I resign?

A42: Mentor terms begin in June 2016 and conclude in May 2017. Those who successfully complete their assigned duties are welcome to serve during the 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.