

STATE OF TEXAS

RESOLUTION

of the

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Improving Civic Education

WHEREAS, the Texas Judicial Council is the policymaking body for the Texas Judicial Branch, created under Chapter 71, Texas Government Code; and

WHEREAS, the Council is charged with improving the administration of justice; and

WHEREAS, improving civic education has long been a priority of the Council; and

WHEREAS, numerous statistics have identified a need to strengthen and improve civic education in our schools, especially a deeper understanding of the purpose and role of the 3rd branch of government; and

WHEREAS, civic education equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be active, responsible citizens in a democracy; and

WHEREAS, while students in Texas are required to take both U.S. and Texas history and a semester of U.S. Government to advance their civic knowledge, there remains an insufficient focus on civic skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are critical to a sustained and responsible civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Judicial Council is happy to partner with various stakeholders including the Texas Civic Education Coalition to advance civic education in our state; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Judicial Council recommends that the legislature adopt the recommendations of the Texas Civic Education Coalition and Council that make changes to civic education in Texas for grades K-12 with the following components:

1. Define the elements of a comprehensive civic education that research shows results in informed and responsible civic engagement:
 - a. **Civic knowledge** - an understanding of the history and heritage of our civic life; the structure, functions, and processes of our civic institutions at all levels; founding-era documents; geography and economics that affect public policy; and the role of the citizen.
 - b. **Civic skills** - the abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens in a democracy; training on how to effectively engage in the civic life and civic institutions of their community, state and nation; how to analyze text and

determine the reliability of sources; how to formulate and articulate reasoned positions; how to actively listen and engage in civil discourse; and collaboration and community organizing skills.

- c. **Civic attitudes** – appreciation of the importance and responsibility to participate in civic life; commitment to our nation and system of government; appreciation for the rule of law, free speech, and civil discourse; civic self-efficacy and understanding of perspectives that differ from one’s own.
 - d. **Civic behaviors** - practicing civic habits, including voting, engaging in deliberative discussions, volunteering, attending public meetings and participating in other civic activities related to civic life through meaningful experiential opportunities or classroom simulations.
2. Recognizing the foundational civic knowledge requirements already existing in Texas educational standards but emphasizing the need for additional K-12 instruction on civic skills as well as appropriate civic attitudes in addition to just civic facts;
 3. Mandating a student-led but curriculum-based, non-partisan civics practicum or project in the 8th grade and once in high school to effectively demonstrate understanding of crucial civic behaviors;
 4. Requiring the Board of Education, during the already scheduled 2023 revision cycle, to revise or enhance the current social studies teaching standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) to provide for all four civic education domains described above and to specifically include these civic education domains where possible in existing history standards;
 5. Instructing the TEA to infuse civics education into other disciplines by providing content rich, non-fiction civics texts in English Language Arts testing where reading and writing prompts are used and in approved ELA reading lists;
 6. Requiring social studies teachers to have 25% of their teacher continuing education hours mandated every 5 years by the Education Code be specifically on effective teaching of media literacy, simulations of democratic processes, civic practicums, and guided classroom discussions of current events.



Honorable Nathan L. Hecht
Chair, Texas Judicial Council