



State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

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2025 ASSEMBLY BILL 4

February 3, 2025 - Introduced by Representatives NEDWESKI, BEHNKE, DITTRICH, DONOVAN, DUCHOW, GUNDRUM, KNODL, KREIBICH, MURPHY, O'CONNOR, STEFFEN, TUSLER, VOS and WICHGERS, cosponsored by Senators WANGGAARD, CABRAL-GUEVARA and FEYEN. Referred to Committee on Education.

AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

AN ACT *to amend* 118.165 (1) (d) and 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b.; *to create* 115.28 (55v), 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m., 118.40 (2x) (b) 2. m., 118.60 (2) (a) 10., 119.23 (2) (a) 10. and 121.02 (1) (L) 9. of the statutes; **relating to:** required instruction in civics in the elementary and high school grades, high school graduation requirements, and private school educational program criteria.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Beginning in the 2027-28 school year, this bill requires school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental choice program to include in their respective curricula instruction in civics that includes the following topics and pupil development goals:

1. An understanding of pupils' shared rights and responsibilities as residents of this state and the United States and of the founding principles of the United States.
2. A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at the local, state, and federal levels.
3. An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before governmental bodies and officials.
4. An understanding of the civic-minded expectations of an upright and

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desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and defending the benefits of liberty inherited from previous generations and secured by the U.S. Constitution.

5. Knowledge of other nations' governing philosophies, including communism, socialism, and totalitarianism, and an understanding of how those philosophies compare with the philosophy and principles of freedom and representative democracy essential to the founding principles of the United States.

The bill also requires school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental choice program to annually report to the Department of Public Instruction regarding how they are meeting the civics instruction requirement created under the bill. DPI must then compile the information and submit it to the legislature.

Finally, under current law, a school board may grant a high school diploma to a pupil only if the pupil meets specific statutory requirements, including earning a certain number of credits in various subjects in the high school grades and passing a civics test comprised of questions that are identical to those that are asked as part of the process of applying for U.S. citizenship. Currently, a pupil must earn at least three credits of social studies, including state and local government. The bill specifies that the social studies credits also must include one-half credit of civics instruction. This graduation requirement first applies to pupils who graduate in the 2030-31 school year.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 115.28 (55v) of the statutes is created to read:

115.28 (55v) CIVICS EDUCATION CURRICULUM; REPORT. Beginning in the 2027-28 school year, annually compile and submit information the department received in the previous school year under ss. 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. and (2x) (b) 2. m., 118.60 (2) (a) 10., 119.23 (2) (a) 10., and 121.02 (1) (L) 9. to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature under s. 13.172 (3).

SECTION 2. 118.165 (1) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.165 (1) (d) The program provides a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies,

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science, and health. This subsection does not require the program to include in its curriculum any concept, topic, or practice in conflict with the program's religious doctrines or mission or to exclude from its curriculum any concept, topic, or practice consistent with the program's religious doctrines or mission.

SECTION 3. 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. At least 3 credits of social studies, including state and local government, that include at least 0.5 credit of civics instruction.

SECTION 4. 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. A requirement that the charter school's curriculum include the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. and that the charter school annually report to the department regarding how the charter school governing board is meeting the requirement under this subd. 2. m.

SECTION 5. 118.40 (2x) (b) 2. m. of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 (2x) (b) 2. m. A requirement that the charter school's curriculum include the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. and that the charter school annually report to the department regarding how the charter school governing board is meeting the requirement under this subd. 2. m.

SECTION 6. 118.60 (2) (a) 10. of the statutes is created to read:

118.60 (2) (a) 10. The private school includes in its curriculum the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. and annually reports to the department regarding how the private school is meeting the requirement under this subdivision.

SECTION 7. 119.23 (2) (a) 10. of the statutes is created to read:

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119.23 (2) (a) 10. The private school includes in its curriculum the instruction in civics required under s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. and annually reports to the department regarding how the private school is meeting the requirement under this subdivision.

SECTION 8. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. of the statutes is created to read:

121.02 (1) (L) 9. Include instruction in civics that includes all of the following topics and pupil development goals and annually report to the department how the school board is meeting the requirement under this subdivision:

a. An understanding of pupils' shared rights and responsibilities as residents of this state and the United States and of the founding principles of the United States, including the history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including natural and popular sovereignty and self-evident truth, and how those concepts form the philosophical foundations of government; the history, meaning, significance, and effect of provisions of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and how those documents provide the structure of government; and the arguments in support of adopting the republican form of government, including those arguments contained in the Federalist Papers.

b. A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at the local, state, and federal levels.

c. An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before governmental bodies and officials.

d. An understanding of the civic-minded expectations of an upright and desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and

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defending the benefits of liberty inherited from previous generations and secured by the U.S. Constitution.

e. Knowledge of other nations' governing philosophies, including communism, socialism, and totalitarianism, and an understanding of how those philosophies compare with the philosophy and principles of freedom and representative democracy essential to the founding principles of the United States.

SECTION 9. Initial applicability.

(1) The treatment of s. 118.40 (2r) (b) 2. m. and (2x) (b) 2. m. first applies to a contract that is entered into, renewed, or modified on the effective date of this subsection.

(2) The treatment of ss. 118.60 (2) (a) 10. and 119.23 (2) (a) 10. first applies to an application to attend a private school under a parental choice program in the 2027-28 school year.

(3) The treatment of s. 121.02 (1) (L) 9. first applies to curriculum for the 2027-28 school year.

(4) The treatment of s. 118.33 (1) (a) 1. b. first applies to a pupil who graduates in the 2030-31 school year.

SECTION 10. Effective date.

(1) This act takes effect on July 1, 2026.

(END)