

# School Board Executive Summary

**Topic:** Committee on American Civics (Written Report)

**Date:** April 27, 2026

**Presented by:** Mark Weichel, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning



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**Recommended Action:** ☒ Information Only  
☐ Presentation/Discussion  
☐ Discussion/Action by Board of Education  
☐ Presentation/Action Next Meeting

**Recommendation:** None at this time. Informational written report to the Board.

**Background:** An American Civics Education Bill was introduced in the Nebraska Legislature in 2019 over concerns that some graduates in Nebraska lacked a clear understanding of the nation's history and government, and that civics had taken a backseat in some districts' curricula. The bill, which passed with a 44-2 vote and became statute, requires all school districts to align their curriculum with state social studies standards and provide instruction in civics, history, economics, financial literacy, and geography. As part of the statute, each school board must appoint three members to an American Civics Committee that meets twice a year, with one meeting allowing for public testimony. This team met in the fall, and prior to tonight's board meeting. Westside's American Civics Committee met with social studies leaders from across the district, who shared curriculum updates from each grade level. This report outlines the specific statute requirements and confirms how Westside Community Schools meets the expectations of the American Civics statute.

**Attachment(s):** Requirements of Nebraska Statute 79-724

**Nebraska Statute 79-724** outlines requirements for school districts to have a Committee on American Civics and duties related to that committee. The table below outlines the requirements of the statute and how we meet those requirements.

Requirement	How We Meet the Requirement
<p>Annually, the School Board must appoint three members to a “Committee on American Civics”.</p> <p>Hold no fewer than two public meetings annually, and public testimony must be accepted at one.</p> <p>Keep minutes of each meeting.</p>	<p>Committee for 2025-2026 appointed. (Dana Blakely, Beth Morrisette, and Sarah Rider)</p> <p>September 22, 2025: Public committee meeting where minutes will be kept to review American Civics requirements and action steps for 2025-2026.</p> <p>April 27, 2026: Public committee meeting where minutes will be kept at the annual curriculum review by social studies department leaders. Public Comment will be offered at the regular board meeting.</p>
<p>The committee will carefully examine, inspect, and approve all textbooks.</p>	<p>Curriculum leaders are part of a toolbox process that selects materials that are aligned with the state standards. Materials are shared with the Americanism Committee on an annual basis.</p>
<p>Assure that teachers employed in the district have knowledge of and acceptance of the American form of government.</p>	<p>Human Resources has a well-aligned hiring protocol for all new hires.</p>
<p>American history courses shall stress the contributions of all ethnic groups, the development and growth of America into a great nation, and art, music, education, medicine, literature, science, politics, and government, and the war services in all wars.</p>	<p>Information is included on K-12 curriculum maps for each social studies course. The state standards are addressed and taught throughout the district.</p>
<p>All grade levels below sixth grade shall teach with the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noteworthy events in American history or exceptional acts of individuals or groups of Americans</li> <li>• The historical background, memorization, and singing of patriotic songs</li> <li>• Developing respect for the American flag as a symbol of freedom and sacrifice</li> <li>• Proper conduct in the presentation of the American flag</li> </ul>	<p>Information is included on curriculum maps, and time is outlined on the elementary schedule for social studies. Patriotic music is a component of the music curriculum.</p>

<p>In at least two grades from fifth to eighth grade, time shall be set aside to teach American history in the social studies curriculum.</p> <p>In at least two courses in every high school, time shall be devoted to the teaching of civics and American history</p>	<p>This is a specific focus in fifth and eighth grade, which is represented on the grade level's curriculum maps.</p> <p>These topics are the main points of emphasis at the high school in the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early U. S History (grade 11)</li> <li>• Modern U. S. History (grade 11)</li> <li>• AP U.S. History (grades 11-12)</li> <li>• Government (grades 11-12)</li> </ul>
<p>The district holds appropriate patriotic exercises on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Washington's birthday</li> <li>• Abraham Lincoln's birthday</li> <li>• Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday</li> <li>• Native American Heritage Day</li> <li>• Constitution Day</li> <li>• Memorial Day</li> <li>• Veteran's Day</li> <li>• Thanksgiving Day</li> <li>• Addition of Malcolm X's Birthday in 2024-2025</li> </ul>	<p>Each school acknowledges these significant dates through announcements, with their meanings also included in school lunch menus. Additionally, some schools organize extra activities on certain dates. In instances where these dates fall on non-school days, the announcements and activities are scheduled for the nearest school day.</p>
<p>Ensure that each student either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes the US Citizenship test in 8th and 12th grades with the score available to parents and guardians when requested, <b>OR</b></li> <li>• Attend a meeting of a public body and complete a project or paper about the personal learning experience of attending the meeting <b>OR</b></li> <li>• Completion of a project or paper and a class presentation between the commencement of eighth grade and the completion of twelfth grade on a person or persons or an event commemorated by a holiday listed in subdivision (6) of this section or on a topic related to such person or persons or event</li> </ul>	<p>The District meets this requirement by administering the US citizenship test to students at the middle and high school. Results of the citizenship test are shared annually at the spring meeting.</p>