

Materials and Resources in Support of Act 35 of 2018 Assessment of Civic Knowledge

July 2019



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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Pennsylvania Department of Education Support for Act 35 of 2018 Assessment of Civics Knowledge

The Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights are the documents that express the principles and philosophy of government of the United States of America. These “Charters of Freedom” have given guidance to each generation of Americans to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.

Each person born in the United States is a citizen. Others become citizens through a voluntary legal process which requires meeting certain criteria: having basic knowledge of U.S. government, U.S. history; and verbally committing to uphold the Constitution. With this commitment, the new citizen becomes part of “We the People.”

The American Experiment in government began in 1787 with a radical new concept of the people choosing how they are governed. Education of the people is a critical success factor of this government. Thomas Jefferson expressed, "An **educated citizenry** is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people." The foundation for an educated citizenry has long been established in the support of public education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Several state documents outline how Pennsylvania’s students acquire knowledge around U.S. civics topics.

Chapter 4 Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code

§ 4.11. Purpose of public education.

(b) Public education prepares students for adult life by attending to their intellectual and developmental needs and challenging them to achieve at their highest level possible. In conjunction with families and other community institutions, public education prepares students to become self-directed, life-long learners and responsible, involved citizens.

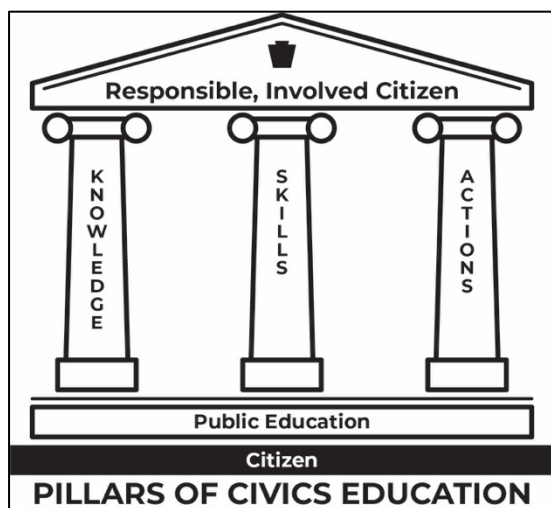
Act 35 of 2018, the entirety of which is available in Appendix A, was passed by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Tom Wolf in June 2018.

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each school entity shall administer at least once to students during grades seven through twelve a locally developed assessment of U.S. history, government and civics that includes the nature, purpose, principles and structure of U.S. constitutional democracy, the principles, operations and documents of U.S. government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

Act 35 continues with responsibilities of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to include among other things, providing school entities with resources which will support the implementation of Act 35. Several

State Academic Standards for Civics and Government, Economics, Geography and History (approved by the State Board of Education) guide school entities in developing a strong curriculum that includes civic knowledge. The academic standards provide the foundation for meeting the purpose of public education as specified in Chapter 4 of the Public School Code of 1949. The implementation of the developed curriculum; the modeling of civic behavior by educators, administrators, and community members; and opportunities for students to participate in civic endeavors are part of a quality civic education program.

Quality Civic Education Programs



Research from respected organizations in civic engagement conclude that quality civics education programs have three strong pillars:

1. **KNOWLEDGE** - a fundamental understanding of the structure of government and the processes by which government passes laws and makes policy
2. **SKILLS** - abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens in democracy
3. **ACTIONS** – activities of citizens that include voting, participating in community meetings, volunteering, communicating with elected and appointed officials, signing petitions

Pillar 1: Knowledge

The knowledge pillar underscores planned instruction to support student understanding of concepts of the Academic Standards. Assessment focuses on the four critical components of civics education:

- Principles and Documents of Government
- Rights and Responsibilities
- How Government Works
- International Relationships

Pillar 2: Skills

The skills pillar seeks to have students engage in active civic participation: applying the knowledge gained in the first pillar. At the school level, students participate in student council/school governance, extracurricular activities, mock trials and similar simulation activities, service learning, and various clubs and organizations. Opportunities for civil discussions, discourse, and debate also provide opportunities to hone skills.

Another important aspect of skills development is the need for tolerance and acceptance of others. Anti-bullying initiatives and programs such as Positive Schoolwide Behavior Support (PBIS) are critical components in the schoolwide setting.

Pillar 3: Actions

Responsible and involved citizens take an active role through a myriad of actions and dispositions:

- Acceptance of diversity
- Involvement in the community
- Military service

- Voting in elections
- Assuming responsibility for choices
- Respecting rule of law
- Political attentiveness
- Government service – local, state, and national
- Respecting those who serve the common good
- Educator professional development

By incorporating all three pillars in a civics program, students acquire the knowledge behind the meaning of “We the People.” They have an opportunity to operate as a citizen, experience citizenry and understand that the government of the United States is theirs. This encourages each generation to “secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.”

Guidance for Program Success

A quality civics program includes the following components:

- Developing a robust curriculum based in the Pennsylvania Academic Standards populated with quality resources curated by the Department of Education
- Providing professional development in the areas of Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Actions for all educators
- Modeling responsible involved citizenship daily in classrooms, schools and community
- Supporting an active student government
- Involving/exposing students with community programs at each grade level

Resources

PDE has assembled a group of national, state, and local experts in civic education. This Civics Advisory Council provided guidance on building a program and providing a collection of vetted, quality resources. PDE, in consultation with the Civics Advisory Council, has created this toolkit, available online in the Standards Aligned System (www.pdesas.org) and the PDE website www.education.pa.gov in accordance with Act 35.

Note: Generally, the descriptions that follow reflect narratives provided by the website providers.

Pillar 1: Civic Knowledge

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

<https://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/naturalization-test>

This U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services hosted website offers a comprehensive collection of materials and resources on how to become a naturalized citizen.

Study Materials for the Civics Test

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test>

This U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services site contains an official list of civics questions and answers for the naturalization test, a practice test, flash cards, and other study resources to prepare applicants for the test.

Citizenship Resource Center

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship>

This official website of the Department of Homeland Security is a comprehensive site for learners, educators, and organizations. The teacher section includes lesson plans, training seminars, professional development, and links to supplemental resources.

The United States House of Representatives

<https://www.house.gov/>

Along with detailed explanations of the branches of government and the legislative process, the site offers other valuable information such as a listing of all House of Representative members, current legislative activity, and the ability to view live House proceedings.

The United States Senate

<https://www.senate.gov/>

Similar to the United States House of Representatives website, updated information on Senate activities, including access to live Senate proceedings, is available.

United States Government Publishing Office

<https://www.govinfo.gov/>

This government publishing site provides free public access to official publications from all three branches of the Federal Government.

The Annenberg Classroom

<https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/>

The Annenberg Classroom's free resources include videos on constitutional concepts, Supreme Court cases, games, lesson plans, timelines, downloadable books, and a US Constitution guide.

Civics Renewal Network

<https://www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org/>

The Civics Renewal Network is a consortium of nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations committed to strengthening civic life in the United States by increasing the quality of civics education in our nation's classrooms and by improving accessibility to high-quality, no-cost learning materials.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania

<https://hsp.org/>

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania's collection contains materials from over the centuries to the present day, documenting the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people, fulfilling our mission to make history relevant and exhilarating for all.

Library of Congress Classroom

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/>

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with millions of books, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps and manuscripts in its collections. The Library is the main research arm of the U.S. Congress and the home of the U.S. Copyright Office.

Museum of the American Revolution

<http://www.amrevmuseum.org/>

The Museum of the American Revolution has an impressive collection of several thousand objects, works of art, manuscripts, and printed works from the period of the American Revolution.

The National Constitution Center

<https://constitutioncenter.org/>

The National Constitution Center brings together people of all ages and perspectives, across America and around the world, to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution.

The National Archives Administration

<https://www.archives.gov/>

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the nation's record keeper. Documents and materials created in the course of business conducted by the United States Federal government are available on this site.

The Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement

<https://www.rendellcenter.org/>

Promoting civic education and engagement, the Rendell Center offers opportunities and resources for educators, students and the broader community to develop the knowledge, practices and dispositions of engaged citizenship.

Senator John Heinz History Center

<https://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/>

Known as the Smithsonian's home in Pennsylvania the Heinz History Center engages and inspires a diverse audience with links to the past, understanding in the present, and guidance for the future by preserving regional history and presenting the American experience with a Western Pennsylvania connection."

The Supreme Court of the United States

<https://www.supremecourt.gov/>

The Court is the highest tribunal in the Nation for all cases and controversies arising under the Constitution or the laws of the United States. The website provides historical and current information on the arguments, decisions and opinions of the court.

Supreme Court Of The United States (SCOTTUS) Blog

<https://www.scotusblog.com/>

SCOTUSblog is devoted to covering the U.S. Supreme Court comprehensively, without bias and in accordance with the highest journalistic and legal ethical standards. The blog is provided as a public service.

The United States Courts

<https://www.uscourts.gov/>

The U.S. Courts website offers educational information and current happenings in the Federal Courts. Maintained by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts on behalf of the Federal Judiciary, this site is designed to provide information from and about the judicial branch of the U.S. Government.

Pillar 2: Civic Skills

Civic Discourse Rules and Practice

<https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/setting-ground-rules-civil-discourse-and-difficult>

The United States Courts offer many resources, including guidelines for helping students practice civil discourse for opposing viewpoints.

Committee of 70

<https://seventy.org/>

The Committee of Seventy is a nonpartisan civic leadership organization that advances representative, ethical and effective government in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania through citizen engagement and public policy advocacy. Their “Draw the Lines” program (<https://drawthelinespa.org/>) is a redistricting contest for understanding gerrymandering.

Echoes and Reflections

<https://echoesandreflections.org/>

A collaboration of the Anti Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation, and the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum, this curriculum provides resources and workshops to assist educators in teaching the complexities of Holocaust, genocide, and human rights.

Icivics

<https://www.icivics.org/>

Icivics exists to engage students in meaningful civic learning. The site provides teachers well written, inventive, and free resources to enhance their practice and inspire their classrooms in civic education.

Model United Nations Institute

<https://bestdelegate.com/what-is-model-united-nations/>

The Model United Nations enables students to gain real world skills, learn about global issues, and enhance their leadership. Model UN or MUN, is an extra-curricular activity in which students typically roleplay delegates to the United Nations and simulate UN committees.

National History Day

<https://www.nhd.org/affiliate/pennsylvania>

National History Day engages students in grades 6-12 in the process of discovery and interpretation of historical topics. Students produce dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries, web sites, and papers based on research related to an annual theme. Students enter their projects in local and regional competitions and compete for the opportunity to advance to higher levels of competition.

National Model United States Congress

<http://www.nationalmodelcongress.org/>

The National Model Congress assists students in connecting classroom learning to real world knowledge. Educational simulations of the legislative process provide unique experiences for students to interact on the issues facing our federal, state and local governments.

Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils

<https://www.pasc.net/>

The Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils offers year round opportunities for students and advisors to develop and apply leadership skills for self-improvement, and enhancement of their schools and their communities.

The Pennsylvania Bar Association

<https://www.pabar.org/site/>

The Pennsylvania Bar Association hosts events for students, including a program that gives students the opportunity to learn more about the US and PA Constitutions. The association offers educational resources and prepared videos for classrooms and hosts a Law Day that allows judges to visit classrooms and message the role of courts in democracy. The site includes lesson plans, e.g., "The First Amendment & Protection of Students' Rights."

Pennsylvania Bar Association Mock Trial Competition

<https://www.pabar.org/site/For-the-Public/Mock-Trial-Competition>

One of the largest in the nation, the Pennsylvania Bar Association /YLD Mock Trial Competition gives more than 300 high school student teams from across the state the opportunity to act as lawyers and witnesses in simulated civil and criminal trials before actual judges and panels of juries. Lawyers volunteer to assist students as team advisors, scorekeepers and regional coordinators. Each year, the winning team goes on to represent Pennsylvania in the national competition.

Project Peace

<http://www.pabar.org/public/education/projectpeace/projectpeacehome.asp> Project PEACE is a partnership of the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation. Project Peace is peer-mediation, anti-bullying and youth court training program centering around the skills of non-violent conflict resolution and active civic engagement.

Youth Courts

<http://www.pabar.org/public/committees/childavo/YouthCourtsBackgroundInformation.pdf>

Youth courts are student operated disciplinary systems that use positive peer pressure to correct disruptive behavior. Youth courts can be structures within a school based system to keep at-risk youths in school and out of the formal juvenile or criminal justice system. The program provides opportunities for public speaking, problem solving, literacy skills and promoting citizenship and socialization of student body members.

Pillar 3 Actions

Pennsylvania Voter registration

<https://www.votespa.com/Register-to-Vote/Pages/How-to-Register-to-Vote.aspx>

This site details the voter registration process via a short video and step by step procedures for registering online, by mail, in person at the county registration office, and at PennDOT and other government agencies.

Pennsylvania Department of State Governor's Civic Engagement Award

<https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/Documents/GCEA-School-Application.pdf>

The Governor's Civic Engagement Award is intended to recognize and commemorate the efforts of the next generation of leaders to educate, engage and inform their fellow students how to get involved in the voting process. Individual students must be recommended for the award by a representative from their school or the county election office. Award applications can be mailed to: Department of State, c/o Governor's Civic Engagement Award, 210 North Office Bldg., Harrisburg, PA, 17120 or emailed to ra-voterreg@pa.gov.

Inspire U.S.

https://www.inspire-usa.org/high_school_signup

Inspire U.S. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and is strictly nonpartisan. It currently has schools in planning and conducting student peer-to-peer voter registration activities, as well as guides students to engage with elected officials at the local, state and national level. Inspire U.S. is collaborating with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to launch this year's Governor's Civic Engagement Award.

4-H Civic Engagement

<https://4-h.org/parents/civic-engagement/>

The 4-H civic engagement programs empower young people to be well-informed citizens actively engaged in their communities and the world. Youth learn about civic affairs, build decision-making skills and develop a sense of understanding and confidence in relating and connecting to other people.

American Foreign Service Association National High School Essay Contest

<http://www.afsa.org/essay-contest>

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)'s National High School Essay Contest encourages students to think about how and why the United States engages globally to build peace, and about the role that the foreign service plays in advancing U.S. national security and economic prosperity.

A Broader View

<https://www.abroaderview.org/>

A Broader View enables volunteers to travel to foreign countries to engage in service work abroad. The project is designed to engage volunteers in humanitarian projects to gain a greater perspective and understanding of different cultures while also giving back to communities worldwide. Programs include travelling to teach English and reading skills, to help establish elderly care programs abroad, and to aid with women's support projects. The project supports high school faculty-led service trips, as well as trips for college groups.

Campus Compact

<https://compact.org/>

Campus Compact is a coalition of over 1,000 colleges and universities with the goal of providing civic engagement programs. Among the many resources are links to websites offering relevant information such as voting, civic engagement, and fact checking.

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR): Good Citizens Award and Scholarship

<https://www.dar.org/sites/default/files/members/darnet/forms/DGC-1007.pdf>

The DAR Good Citizens Award and Scholarship Contest is intended to encourage and reward the qualities of good citizenship. This award recognizes and rewards 12th grade students who possess good citizenship qualities of dependability, service, leadership, and patriotism in their homes, schools, and communities. These students are selected by their teachers and peers because they demonstrate these qualities to an outstanding degree.

Habitat for Humanity

<https://www.habitat.org/>

Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope. They have programs for teen volunteers.

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp Programs

<http://www.usarmyjrotc.com/index.php>

The U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is one of the world's largest character development and citizenship programs for youth. The National Defense Act of 1916 established organized JROTC programs at public and private educational institutions. As congressionally mandated by Title 10 United States Code, Section 2031, each military service must have a JROTC program to "instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment."

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania

<https://www.palwv.org/>

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania is a nonpartisan grassroots organization designed to help voters to learn about government issues and candidates.

The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) Americanism Elementary School Poster Contest

<https://members.sar.org/media/uploads/pages/50/5cs4yI4FCoIq.pdf>

The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) invites all 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students interested in the American Revolution to participate in the Americanism Elementary School Poster Contest. The contest is open to public school, parochial, home schooled, Scouting, or Children of the American Revolution member students in that same grade range. Young artists with an enthusiasm toward art, a love of American history, or a passion in creative expression can submit their posters to their local SAR chapter for competition.

Special Olympics PA

<https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer>

The mission of Special Olympics PA is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and

participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

United States Senate Youth Scholarship Program

https://ussenateyouth.org/selection_process_qualify/

The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) is an intensive week-long educational experience and scholarship sponsored by the United States Senate for outstanding high school students who are interested in pursuing careers in public service. Rising high school juniors and seniors may obtain a United States Senate Youth Scholarship Program application through their high school principals, guidance counselors and social studies teachers OR they may inquire directly to their state selection contacts using this website.