

FAQ:
NEW YORK STATE CIVICS EDUCATION

What is civics education?

According to the [*National Standards for Civics and Government*](#):

“The goal of education in civics and government is informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy. Their effective and responsible participation requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and of intellectual and participatory skills. Effective and responsible participation is also furthered by development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance the individual’s capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the healthy functioning of the political system and improvement of society.”

([Center for Civic Education](#), 1994, p. 1)

Can civics education be addressed in all New York State Learning Standards?

Yes. According to the New York State learning standard for *Civics, Citizenship, and Government* ([Social Studies Standard 5](#)):

“Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of the American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.”

The intellectual skills required for students to demonstrate mastery of this learning standard are found in multiple subject areas. Students can explore civics from multiple perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of its concepts and themes.

For more information and resources on the NYS Learning Standards, please see the New York State Education Department’s [Virtual Learning System](#), a web-based tool for teaching and learning.

How do I use the civics education toolkit?

- Read the [Rationale](#) to learn how civics education is a fundamental part of teaching and learning in New York State.
 - Review the [Crosswalk](#) that shows how the concepts, themes, and skills of civics education crosses all disciplines within the New York State Learning Standards.
 - Learn about [Strategies](#) that provide tools and ideas for implementing a standards-based, interdisciplinary civics education program in your school or district.
 - Explore sample online [Resources](#) for civics education that have been aligned to the New York State Learning Standards.
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Is civics education included in the Education Law of New York?

Yes. Article 17 - Instruction in Certain Subjects, Section 801-a, addresses *Instruction in civility, citizenship and character education*:

“The regents shall ensure that the course of instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve includes a component on civility, citizenship and character education. Such component shall instruct students on the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observation of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity and other traits which will enhance the quality of their experiences in, and contributions to, the community. The regents shall determine how to incorporate such component in existing curricula and the commissioner shall promulgate any regulations needed to carry out such determination of the regents.”

Such instruction can occur throughout all subject areas in a standards-based teaching and learning program.

Education Law also addresses:

- Section 801. Courses of instruction in patriotism and citizenship and in certain historic documents.
- Section 802. Instruction relating to the flag; holidays.
- Section 802-a. Instruction relating to general elections.

For more information, please see these online sections of the [Education Law](#).

Does New York State have curriculum frameworks? Are they aligned with the New York State Learning Standards?

Yes and yes. Each Learning Standard has a curriculum framework aligned to its individual learning standards.

For more information, please see the [NYS Learning Standards and Core Curriculum](#).

Are students required to take a course in civics to graduate from high school?

Yes. According to [Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education](#) relating to general education and diploma requirements, students must have

- 1/2 unit of credit in Participation in Government or its equivalent as approved by the local public school superintendent or his or her designee or by the chief administrative officer of a registered non-public high school.

Although this course is traditionally offered in a high school's social studies department, schools and districts can create interdisciplinary learning experiences for this course. For more information, please see the [Participation in Government core curriculum](#) (note: this is a PDF file).

How can interdisciplinary learning experiences help prepare students for assessments?

Graduation requirements in New York State require students to demonstrate mastery in the New York State Learning Standards at the commencement level. The Learning Standards were designed for specific content areas, yet students will need to read and write for all State assessments. Interdisciplinary instruction addresses many Learning Standards simultaneously, providing a richer learning environment and better preparing students to demonstrate their mastery of specific standards on future assessments. As students focus on such areas as reading comprehension in multiple standard areas, students are able to comprehend more fully, and develop stronger critical thinking skills. Since all assessments are tests of student achievement in a standards-based instructional program, interdisciplinary teaching and learning can foster student achievement in multiple Learning Standards. Student achievement will prepare students for higher education, the global workplace, and citizenship.

What are the textbook adoption or selection criteria?

New York is a non-endorsing state. This means that local school districts are free to select the resources for teaching and learning that best meet the needs of their students in achieving the New York State Learning Standards. Therefore, resources like this toolkit

can help your school or district plan for a civics education program that supports the local instructional program.

For more information, please see the [New York State Textbook Loan Program](#) (PDF file).

What are New York State policies on professional development related to civics education?

New York State's professional development policy stipulates that, starting in 2004, teachers applying for certification and all teachers certified thereafter will have to complete 175 hours of professional development every five years in order to maintain certification.

Such professional development hours can be completed under the direction of the local school district, which must establish a professional development plan for educators.

For more information, please see the [professional development requirement](#).

Does New York State require service learning?

New York State does not have a graduation requirement in service learning. Teachers may incorporate service learning in their standards-based instructional program.

One example is in the grade 12 course, Participation in Government. Suggestions for incorporating service learning are included in the [Participation in Government core curriculum](#). (PDF file).

Through [Learn and Serve America](#), New York State provides funding and support to schools and sponsors conferences and annual statewide programs in service learning.

[New York State Education Department](#)

Civics Education Toolkit

FAQ

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