

CIVICS

IN A CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY, productive civic engagement requires knowledge of the history, principles, and foundations of our American democracy, and the ability to participate in civic and democratic processes. People demonstrate civic engagement when they address public problems individually and collaboratively and when they maintain, strengthen, and improve communities and societies. Thus, civics is, in part, the study of how people participate in governing society.

Because government is a means for addressing common or public problems, the political system established by the U.S. Constitution is an important subject of study within civics. Civics requires other knowledge too; students should also learn about state and local governments; markets; courts and legal systems; civil society; other nations' systems and practices; international institutions; and the techniques available to citizens for preserving and changing a society.

Civics is not limited to the study of politics and society; it also encompasses participation in classrooms and schools, neighborhoods, groups, and organizations. Not all participation is beneficial. This framework makes frequent reference to civic *virtues* and principles that guide participation and to the norm of *deliberation* (which means discussing issues and making choices and judgments with information and evidence, civility and respect, and concern for fair procedures). What defines civic virtue, which democratic principles apply in given situations, and when discussions are deliberative are not easy questions, but they are topics for inquiry and reflection. In civics, students learn to contribute appropriately to public processes and discussions of real issues. Their contributions to public discussions may take many forms, ranging from personal testimony to abstract arguments. They will also learn civic practices such as voting, volunteering, jury service, and joining with others to improve society. Civics enables students not only to study how others participate, but also to practice participating and taking informed action themselves.

Civic and Political Institutions

In order to act responsibly and effectively, citizens must understand the important institutions of their society and the principles that these institutions are intended to reflect. That requires mastery of a body of knowledge about law, politics, and government.

Indicators of Dimension 2—Civic and Political Institutions—are detailed in the suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness in Table 9.

TABLE 9: Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness Dimension 2, Civic and Political Institutions

BY THE END OF GRADE 2	BY THE END OF GRADE 5	BY THE END OF GRADE 8	BY THE END OF GRADE 12
INDIVIDUALLY AND WITH OTHERS, STUDENTS...			
D2.Civ.1.K-2. Describe roles and responsibilities of people in authority.	D2.Civ.1.3-5. Distinguish the responsibilities and powers of government officials at various levels and branches of government and in different times and places.	D2.Civ.1.6-8. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts.	D2.Civ.1.9-12. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of local, state, tribal, national, and international civic and political institutions.
D2.Civ.2.K-2. Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.	D2.Civ.2.3-5. Explain how a democracy relies on people’s responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.	D2.Civ.2.6-8. Explain specific roles played by citizens (such as voters, jurors, taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).	D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans’ participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
D2.Civ.3.K-2. Explain the need for and purposes of rules in various settings inside and outside of school.	D2.Civ.3.3-5. Examine the origins and purposes of rules, laws, and key U.S. constitutional provisions.	D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements.	D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.
D2.Civ.4.K-2. <i>Begins in grades 3–5</i>	D2.Civ.4.3-5. Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms.	D2.Civ.4.6-8. Explain the powers and limits of the three branches of government, public officials, and bureaucracies at different levels in the United States and in other countries.	D2.Civ.4.9-12. Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
D2.Civ.5.K-2. Explain what governments are and some of their functions.	D2.Civ.5.3-5. Explain the origins, functions, and structure of different systems of government, including those created by the U.S. and state constitutions.	D2.Civ.5.6-8. Explain the origins, functions, and structure of government with reference to the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and selected other systems of government.	D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens’ and institutions’ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.
D2.Civ.6.K-2. Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.	D2.Civ.6.3-5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.	D2.Civ.6.6-8. Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives.	D2.Civ.6.9-12. Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles

Civics teaches the principles—such as adherence to the social contract, consent of the governed, limited government, legitimate authority, federalism, and separation of powers—that are meant to guide official institutions such as legislatures, courts, and government agencies. It also teaches the virtues—such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives—that citizens should use when they interact with each other on public matters. Principles such as equality, freedom, liberty, respect for individual rights, and deliberation apply to both official institutions and informal interactions among citizens. Learning these virtues and principles requires obtaining factual knowledge of written provisions found in

important texts such as the founding documents of the United States. It also means coming to understand the diverse arguments that have been made about these documents and their meanings. Finally, students understand virtues and principles by applying and reflecting on them through actual civic engagement—their own and that of other people from the past and present.

Indicators of Dimension 2—Participation and Deliberation—are detailed in the suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness in Table 10.

**TABLE 10: Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness
Dimension 2, Participation and Deliberation**

BY THE END OF GRADE 2	BY THE END OF GRADE 5	BY THE END OF GRADE 8	BY THE END OF GRADE 12
INDIVIDUALLY AND WITH OTHERS, STUDENTS...			
D2.Civ.7.K-2. Apply civic virtues when participating in school settings.	D2.Civ.7.3-5. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school settings.	D2.Civ.7.6-8. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.	D2.Civ.7.9-12. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
D2.Civ.8.K-2. Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.	D2.Civ.8.3-5. Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.	D2.Civ.8.6-8. Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.	D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.
D2.Civ.9.K-2. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions while responding attentively to others when addressing ideas and making decisions as a group.	D2.Civ.9.3-5. Use deliberative processes when making decisions or reaching judgments as a group.	D2.Civ.9.6-8. Compare deliberative processes used by a wide variety of groups in various settings.	D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
D2.Civ.10.K-2. Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.	D2.Civ.10.3-5. Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues.	D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.	D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

Processes, Rules, and Laws

Civics is the discipline of the social studies most directly concerned with the processes and rules by which groups of people make decisions, govern themselves, and address public problems. People address problems at all scales, from a classroom to the agreements among nations. Public policies are among the tools that governments use to address public problems. Students must learn how various rules, processes, laws, and policies actually work, which requires factual

understanding of political systems and is the focus of this section. They must also obtain experience in defining and addressing public problems, as prompted in Dimension 4—Taking Informed Action.

Indicators of Dimension 2—Processes, Rules, and Laws—are detailed in the suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness in Table 11.

**TABLE 11: Suggested K-12 Pathway for College, Career, and Civic Readiness
Dimension 2, Processes, Rules, and Laws**

BY THE END OF GRADE 2	BY THE END OF GRADE 5	BY THE END OF GRADE 8	BY THE END OF GRADE 12
INDIVIDUALLY AND WITH OTHERS, STUDENTS...			
D2.Civ.11.K-2. Explain how people can work together to make decisions in the classroom.	D2.Civ.11.3-5. Compare procedures for making decisions in a variety of settings, including classroom, school, government, and/or society.	D2.Civ.11.6-8. Differentiate among procedures for making decisions in the classroom, school, civil society, and local, state, and national government in terms of how civic purposes are intended.	D2.Civ.11.9-12. Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.
D2.Civ.12.K-2. Identify and explain how rules function in public (classroom and school) settings.	D2.Civ.12.3-5. Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.	D2.Civ.12.6-8. Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.	D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.
<i>Begins in grades 3–5</i>	D2.Civ.13.3-5. Explain how policies are developed to address public problems.	D2.Civ.13.6-8. Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of public policies in multiple settings.	D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.
D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.	D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.	D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.	D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.