

Dear Parent,

The Arizona Department of Education has recently signed into law a new high school graduation requirement. This new law comes from House Bill 2064 and states that in order to receive a high school diploma in Arizona, students must pass a civics exam with at least a 60%. This new graduation requirement applies to all students in the graduating class of 2017 and later. This would typically represent current high school juniors and younger.

The exact language from HB 2064 is written below:

“BEGINNING IN THE 2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR, THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES SHAL INCLUDE A REQUIREMENT THAT, IN ORDER TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL OR OBTAIN A HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA, A PUPIL MUST CORRECTLY ANSWER AT LEAST SIXTY OF THE ONE HUNDRED QUESTIONS LISTED ON A TEST THAT IS IDENTICAL TO THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE NATURALIZATION TEST USED BY THE UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES. A DISTRICT SCHOOL OR CHARTER SCHOOL SHALL DOCUMENT ON THE PUPIL'S TRANSCRIPT THAT THE PUPIL HAS PASSED A TEST THAT IS IDENTICAL TO THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE NATURALIZATION TEST USED BY THE UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES AS REQUIRED BY THIS SECTION.”

In order to allow students opportunities to pass this new Civics exam, FUSD is preparing to offer the exam to all students in grades 9-11 in November of 2015. Since our current curriculum is designed to teach students all of the required information to pass the Civics exam by the end of 8th grade, we anticipate a high success rate for our high school students taking the test this November.

For students that do not pass the exam in November, at least one more opportunity to pass the exam will be offered this academic school year in May when the exam will be given to all 8th grade students and any high school students who did not pass in November. Student may take the Civics exam an unlimited number of times until they pass & more opportunities to take the test will be offered if needed.

Though FUSD is expecting high rates of student success on this exam, we are also currently discussing learning opportunities for those students who are not successful on the first administration of the test. These learning opportunities may come in the form of after school tutoring, pathway selections at the school sites, or potentially even an online course designed specifically for the Civics exam.

Once a student passes the exam, they will not be required to take it again regardless of what grade level they are in when they pass. We have already begun making the necessary modifications to our student information system to ensure a student's passing criteria is recorded on their transcript.

If you have any questions about the new Civics exam graduation requirement you can visit <http://www.azed.gov/hsgraduation/> to learn more about the requirement. You can also visit <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test> to find study guides and practice exams for the Civics test.

Mary Walton
Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum
& Instruction

Robert Hagstrom
Director, Research & Assessment