

SB35 INTRODUCED



1 SB35
2 FVHMCCD-1
3 By Senator Smitherman
4 RFD: Education Policy
5 First Read: 06-Feb-24



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SYNOPSIS:

Existing law provides for a core curriculum for students enrolled in public K-12 schools which includes four years of social studies with an emphasis on history.

This bill would require social studies and history instruction to be fact-based, historically accurate, and inclusive.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to public K-12 education; to amend Section 16-6B-2, Code of Alabama 1975; to provide for the teaching of history in a fact-based and inclusive manner.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Section 16-6B-2, Code of Alabama 1975, is amended to read as follows:

"§16-6B-2

Every Alabama student shall be given instruction in grades kindergarten through twelve to prepare him or her to enter the world of work and/or to complete course work at the postsecondary level. In addition to a comprehensive core



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29 curriculum of academics, each local board of education shall
30 offer a program of vocational/technical education.

31 (a) The following words and phrases used in this
32 section ~~shall~~, in the absence of a clear implication
33 otherwise, shall be given the following respective
34 interpretations:

35 ~~(1)~~ (2) REQUIRED COURSES. Courses ~~which~~ that are
36 required to be taken by every student enrolled in public
37 schools in the State of Alabama.

38 ~~(2)~~ (1) ELECTIVE COURSES. Courses ~~which~~ that are neither
39 mandatory nor required to be taken by any student enrolled in
40 public schools in the State of Alabama.

41 (b) The Legislature finds that students must become
42 more literate in the basic skills needed to earn a living or
43 to continue their education. The Legislature further finds
44 that the English language is a common bond that holds our
45 society together. It is necessary that the State Board of
46 Education adopt curriculum policies to ensure that Alabama
47 students have a command of the spoken and written English
48 language. The Legislature further finds that in Alabama
49 schools, students earning a standard high school diploma are
50 only required to earn two credits of mathematics after they
51 enter the ninth grade prior to graduation. The Legislature
52 further finds that special attention must be given to the
53 Alabama courses of study. The State Board of Education shall
54 establish a rigorous and meaningful core curriculum including,
55 but not limited to, all of the following courses for grades
56 nine through twelve in public schools to be phased in



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57 beginning with students entering ninth grade in the 1996-97
58 scholastic year:

59 (1) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of
60 English.

61 (2) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of
62 mathematics, including, but not limited to, material designed
63 to ensure that no high school student fails to learn basic
64 mathematical skills and computer literacy.

65 (3) Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of
66 science.

67 (4) a. Four years (equivalent of four credit units) of
68 social studies with an emphasis on history, music history,
69 fine arts history, geography, economics, and political
70 science. History courses shall include material on the history
71 of the United States and the Constitution of the United
72 States. The Legislature further requires that the curriculum
73 content of American history shall include the teaching of
74 important historical documents including the Constitution of
75 the United States, The Declaration of Independence, The
76 Emancipation Proclamation, The Federalist Papers, and other
77 such documents important to the history and heritage of the
78 United States.

79 b. All social studies and history instruction shall be
80 fact-based, historically accurate, and inclusive of the
81 history and contributions of minority groups.

82 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that credit for
83 required basic core academic courses may be earned in
84 conjunction with vocational courses and/or programs. It is the



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85 intent of the Legislature that local boards of education offer
86 and schedule students into vocational programs.

87 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that, in
88 addition to the required courses, elective courses including,
89 but not limited to, foreign languages, fine arts, physical
90 education, wellness education, and vocational and technical
91 preparation be available to all students as determined by the
92 local board of education. For purposes of this section,
93 American Sign Language is a foreign language; a public school
94 may offer such a course; and a student who successfully
95 completes the course is entitled to receive credit for the
96 course toward satisfaction of a foreign language requirement,
97 pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the Alabama State
98 Board of Education. Beginning with the 2005-2006 school year,
99 the preceding sentence shall apply to hearing-impaired
100 students; and beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, and
101 each school year thereafter, the preceding sentence shall
102 apply to all students. Nothing in this chapter shall be
103 construed to diminish the current requirements of the State
104 Board of Education with respect to health and physical
105 education instruction in grades K-12 or to reduce the effect
106 of Section 16-40-1 regarding health and physical education.

107 (e) The State Board of Education shall adopt necessary
108 policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and standards to
109 require that:

110 (1) The required courses set forth in this section
111 shall be taken by every student enrolled in grades nine
112 through twelve of public schools to be phased in beginning



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113 with students entering the ninth grade in the 1996-97
114 scholastic year. The State Superintendent of Education after a
115 hearing in which he or she determines there exists just cause
116 may grant a one-time delay of one year for a school system
117 from implementation of any one of the required courses.

118 (2) The required courses set forth in this section
119 shall be successfully passed by a student enrolled in grades
120 nine through twelve of public schools prior to such student's
121 graduation or receipt of a diploma, phased in beginning with
122 students entering the ninth grade in the 1996-97 scholastic
123 year. Students identified as eligible for special education
124 services as provided by federal and state law shall be
125 required to meet the provisions set forth in the individual
126 education plan prescribed to meet their individual needs as
127 required by law. The State Board of Education shall continue
128 to set graduation requirements; however, such graduation
129 requirements shall not provide less in the way of requirements
130 in the areas of English, math, science, and social studies as
131 provided in this chapter.

132 (3) In addition to the required courses, a number of
133 elective courses shall be successfully passed by a student
134 enrolled in grades nine through twelve of public schools prior
135 to such student's graduation or receipt of a diploma, phased
136 in beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the
137 1996-97 scholastic year. The State Board of Education shall
138 determine the number and classification of units of credit
139 required for high school graduation.

140 (f) The State Board of Education, on the recommendation



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141 of the State Superintendent of Education, shall prescribe the
142 minimum contents of courses of study for all public elementary
143 and high schools in the state. In every elementary school
144 there shall be taught at least reading including phonics,
145 spelling, handwriting, arithmetic, oral and written English,
146 geography, history of the United States and Alabama,
147 elementary science, hygiene and sanitation, physical
148 education, the arts, including musical and visual arts,
149 environmental protection, and such other studies as may be
150 prescribed by the local board of education. Instruction in
151 handwriting shall include cursive writing so that students are
152 able to create readable documents through legible cursive
153 handwriting by the end of the third grade. Moreover, the State
154 Board of Education shall require the following courses for
155 grades one through eight in all public schools to be phased in
156 beginning with students entering grades one through eight in
157 the 1995-96 scholastic year: English, social studies,
158 mathematics, and science shall be taught each year in grades
159 one through eight. English shall include, but not be limited
160 to, material designed to develop language arts, such as
161 reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Social
162 studies shall emphasize geography and history of the United
163 States and Alabama.

164 (g) The State Board of Education shall adopt necessary
165 policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and/or standards to
166 require college and university departments of education to
167 review their existing educational programs for all prospective
168 teachers in order to ensure that they are properly prepared to



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169 teach the courses required by law.

170 (h) The State Board of Education and all local boards
171 shall develop and implement within ~~ninety~~(90)90 days of July
172 7, 1995, a comprehensive character education program for all
173 grades to consist of not less than ~~ten~~10 minutes instruction
174 per day focusing upon the students' development of the
175 following character traits: Courage, patriotism, citizenship,
176 honesty, fairness, respect for others, kindness, cooperation,
177 self-respect, self-control, courtesy, compassion, tolerance,
178 diligence, generosity, punctuality, cleanliness, cheerfulness,
179 school pride, respect for the environment, patience,
180 creativity, sportsmanship, loyalty, and perseverance. Each
181 plan of instruction shall include the Pledge of Allegiance to
182 the American flag.

183 (i) The State Board of Education shall adopt necessary
184 policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and/or standards to
185 ensure quality vocational/technical education programs.

186 (j) Each local board of education shall certify on an
187 annual basis to the State Board of Education that the
188 applicable schools in the school district are meeting the
189 cursive writing requirements under subsection (f). The State
190 Board of Education may adopt rules to implement this
191 subsection."

192 Section 2. This act shall become effective October 1,
193 2024.