

Teaching American Civics: Two Approaches

What are the differences between the REACH Act and the UNC System’s “Foundations for American Democracy”?

The REACH ACT

- Requires the Constitution, Declaration of Independence and other listed documents to be read “in their entirety.”
- Requires content to be covered in American Government or History course.
- Requires all content to be taught in one 3-credit-hour course.
- Requires students to take a cumulative final exam, testing for student proficiency in the provisions and principles of each document.
- Requires the Board of Governors to submit an annual compliance report to the North Carolina General Assembly.
- Requires syllabus transparency as a key accountability measure.
- Codifies civics education into state law, making it hard to change.
- Includes Community Colleges.
- Provides an enforcement mechanism to ensure that the law is carried out as intended.

Foundations of American Democracy

- Requires students to “evaluate key concepts, principles, arguments and contexts” of key American documents.
- Allows content to be covered in any course (e.g. Theatre, Economics.)
- Allows content to be spread over multiple courses or in modular form.
- Removes the requirement that class conclude with cumulative final exam on founding documents.
- No requirement that the Board of Governors submit an annual compliance report to the General Assembly.
- No requirement to make syllabi transparent to the UNC Board of Governors or the public.
- Civics education remains the purview of faculty, making it easier to change.
- Does not include Community Colleges.
- No enforcement provision.

For more information on the REACH Act, visit <https://jamesgmartin.center/REACH>