

A few years ago, I chaired a City Club of Portland research committee on civics education. Senator Rob Wagner was also on the committee. While there are some fine opportunities for high school students, many are outside of the classroom curriculum and the numbers served are small. The City Club unanimously adopted the committee's report and its recommendations. Reaching out to school districts, we found a real eagerness to increase the civic readiness of all students. But there was a lack of band width, and schools had competing agendas. Not much happened. Speaking for myself, I urge the legislature to pass SB513 requiring all students to take a class in civics and citizen involvement. While integrating civics in social studies and other classes is laudable, it does not assure every student access to a core of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and opportunities that are necessary for successful participation in a democracy. A unified requirement would be a big step in the right direction.

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