A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to education, including modifying provisions related to required social studies instruction, personal financial literacy instruction, and high school equivalency diplomas, and including applicability provisions.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:
Section 1. Section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph b, Code 2022, is amended to read as follows:

b. Five units of the social studies including instruction in voting statutes and procedures, voter registration requirements, the use of paper ballots and voting systems in the election process, and the method of acquiring and casting an absentee ballot. All students shall complete a minimum of one-half unit of United States government and one unit of United States history. The one-half unit of United States government shall include all of the following:

(1) The voting procedure as described in this lettered paragraph and section 280.9A. The government instruction shall also include a

(2) A study of the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution and an assessment of a student’s knowledge of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

(3) Beginning with the students in the 2022-2023 school year graduating class, an assessment of the student’s knowledge of United States government and civics. The most recent version of the civics test developed by the United States citizenship and immigration services shall be used as the assessment required by this subparagraph. The school district or nonpublic school may modify the civics test for a student who has an individualized education program. A student must attain a passing score on the civics test as a condition of graduation. A student who fails to attain a passing score on the civics test may retake the civics test as many times as necessary.

Sec. 2. Section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph k, unnumbered paragraph 1, Code 2022, is amended to read as follows:

One-half unit of personal finance literacy. All students, beginning with the students in the 2020-2021 school year, graduating class, shall complete at least one-half unit of
personal finance literacy as a condition of graduation. All students, beginning with the students in the 2022-2023 school year graduating class, must attain a passing score on an assessment of the student’s knowledge of personal financial literacy as a condition of graduation. A student who fails to attain a passing score on the assessment may retake the assessment as many times as necessary.

Sec. 3. Section 259A.1, Code 2022, is amended to read as follows:

259A.1 Assessment of competency.

The department of education shall cause to be made available for qualified individuals a high school equivalency diploma. The diploma shall be issued on the basis of demonstrated competence in all of the following core areas: reading, language arts, literacy, mathematics, personal financial literacy, science, and social studies.

Sec. 4. Section 259A.5, subsection 2, Code 2022, is amended to read as follows:

2. The state board of education shall adopt rules under chapter 17A to carry out this chapter. Any rules adopted relating to demonstrations of competence for purposes of this chapter shall require such demonstrations to be equivalent to or of greater rigor than those required for high school graduation, and such demonstrations shall include but are not limited to a test battery, credit-based measures, and attainment of other academic credentials. The rules shall also require the demonstrations to include the applicant attaining a passing score on the most recent version of the civics test developed by the United States citizenship and immigration services and a passing score on an assessment of the applicant’s knowledge of personal financial literacy.

Sec. 5. APPLICABILITY. The following apply to individuals applying for a high school equivalency diploma on or after the effective date of this Act:

1. The section of this Act amending section 259A.1.
2. The section of this Act amending section 259A.5, subsection 2.

EXPLANATION

The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

This bill relates to education, including modifying provisions related to required social studies instruction, personal financial literacy instruction, and high school equivalency diplomas.

The bill requires that the United States government instruction provided in school districts and nonpublic schools in grades 9 through 12, beginning with the students in the 2022-2023 graduating class, include an assessment of the student's knowledge of United States government and civics. The bill provides that the most recent version of the civics test developed by the United States citizenship and immigration services shall be used for this assessment. The bill requires a student to attain a passing score on the civics test as a condition of graduation and allows a student to retake the civics test as many times as necessary.

The bill provides that the personal financial literacy instruction provided in school districts and nonpublic schools in grades 9 through 12, beginning with the students in the 2022-2023 graduating class, shall require students to attain a passing score on an assessment of the student's knowledge of personal financial literacy as a condition of graduation. The bill authorizes a student who fails to attain a passing score on the assessment to retake the assessment as many times as necessary.

Current law requires the department of education to make available to certain specified individuals a high school equivalency diploma, which shall be issued on the basis of demonstrated competency in reading, language arts, literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. The bill adds personal financial literacy to this list of areas in which
1 competency must be demonstrated. The bill also requires that
2 the rules adopted by the state board of education to carry out
3 Code chapter 259A (high school equivalency diplomas) shall
4 require the applicant to attain a passing score on the most
5 recent version of the civics test developed by the United
6 States citizenship and immigration services and a passing score
7 on an assessment of the applicant's knowledge of personal
8 financial literacy. The bill provides that these provisions
9 apply to individuals applying for a high school equivalency
10 diploma on or after the effective date of the bill.