



Civic knowledge leads to increased civic participation. However, only 23 percent of eighth graders nationwide scored at a level of proficiency in civics, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress' 2014 research.

A recent report from the Council of State Governments (CSG) discusses the connection between civic education and partisanship.

The CSG report suggest the lack of civic knowledge not only leads to greater political divide, but also has an impact on voter turnout in this country. The U.S.

ranked 31 out of 35 countries for voter turnout among the nations that are part of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, according to the Pew Research Center.

Arkansas is one of a few states addressing the need for more civics in the classroom.

In the Regular Session, we passed Act 478. This requires students to pass the civics portion of the naturalization test, used by immigration services, before they can receive their high school diploma. The bill would require the student to answer at least 60 of the 100 questions correctly. It allows the students to take the test as many times as needed.

This act goes into effect for the 2018-2019 school year. Many schools will be preparing students this year.

Civic programs in schools such as mock trials and Boys State/Girls State also have significant impacts on voting after graduation. These courses may boost voting by enhancing students' knowledge and allowing them to sense a feeling of membership and obligation.

But families do not have to rely on school districts alone. When people attend town meetings, sessions of state legislatures or hearings about proposed projects, they begin to see less political divide and more work on effective policy.

So if you are preparing to send your child back to school this fall, we encourage to think of ways to expose your child to civics lessons together as a family and outside of the classroom.

You can also practice the civics portion of the naturalization test at www.uscis.gov.