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Many educators have already been including lessons that would meet the new requirements — discussing Franklin Delano Roosevelt's disability or debating current events such as the repeal of the “don't ask, don't tell” military policy.

“These are social issues and they're before the Supreme Court,” said Greg Bingham, whose social studies students at Palm Springs High have discussed social issues such as abortion and gay marriage. “These are issues that are important to people.

“We do debate these issues and kids are free to speak their minds.”

Desert Hot Springs High teacher Sinor plans to continue an activity he has done in the past when students learn about civil rights.

His students read and report about news articles describing the “expanding civil rights movement,” which includes the gay rights movement, as well as Asian and Latino Americans and American Indians, he said.

Coachella Valley High School social studies teacher Jenny Braithwaite has used documentaries from the American Civil Liberties Union to initiate discussion about the different sides of issues such as gay marriage and adoption, she said.

“It was more something that I did when I had time,” she said. “Now because of the law, it's something that I must do. It's more of a priority.”

In elementary school, these lessons often focus on respect and discussing how families come in different shapes and sizes.

The California Department of Education specifically mentions fourth grade, where students learn California history, as an opportunity to include LGBT history.

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The intention is not to discuss intimate details of a person's life, said Carolyn Laub, executive director of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

“That said, there are reasons why, to date in history, students have never learned about Bayard Rustin,” a leading civil rights activist whose contributions to Freedom Rides and the 1963 march on Washington have been downplayed because he was openly gay, Laub said.

The law also does not expect schools to guess about a historical figure's orientation, Tom Adams said.

“My understanding from the supporters and authors of the bill, people just want it simply to be honest in their history textbooks about who was who,” he said.

While the state may not be giving direction or consequences to schools, groups such as Safe Schools and some students are watching to ensure the law is followed.

“Students are aware of it and students are talking about it,” Laub said, adding that because the gay rights movement is connected to many current events, it is something that students can relate to and are interested in learning about.

“I'm sure students will let us know if they find that their school, that there is exclusion of LGBT Americans from discussion in their schools.”

Palm Springs High School juniors Cayman Scott and Serene Hersh, both 16, said they have not discussed Harvey Milk or the gay rights movement in their social studies class so far, though they know of other classes where they have been discussed.

Cathedral City resident Blair Merrihew said his son mentioned the new law back when it was first approved, but hasn't heard more about it.

“It's not a big thing to me,” Merrihew said.

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