

CLOSE UP: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTEGRATING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES INTO YOUR CLASSROOM



SESSION OVERVIEW: INTEGRATING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

In order to incorporate skills and knowledge developed in the first professional development session, teachers need space to reflect on their initial steps towards meaningful engagement with current issues, and time to plan ways to incorporate current issue discussions into the curriculum. This session is intended to help teachers move along the continuum from occasional discussion of current events to fully integrated discourse on current issues connecting the classroom to the world. This session will be composed of three elements: time to work in curriculum teams to identify specific places to incorporate current issues, political values, and deliberative strategies; an introduction to and close examination of specific lessons, materials, and activities that focus on community engagement and active citizenship; and a period of review and reflection.

Session topics will include:

- 1. Share, Reflect, and Address Specific Challenges:** Close Up Trainers will lead a short reflection to elicit a list of activities, practices, and strategies that teachers have used so far and to identify specific challenges facing teachers. As common themes emerge, Close Up Trainers will help teachers explore appropriate responses to those challenges, explain best practices, and work to foster a community built on sharing ideas, practices, and success stories. Throughout the session, Close Up trainers will return to basic strategies, questions, and activities discussed during the initial professional development session in order to reinforce the groundwork laid previously.
- 2. Citizenship in Action:** Teachers will receive and review resources that help students build skills needed for active citizenship, such as gathering, assessing, and using information; communicating with diverse groups; and promoting and advocating for specific ideas. Teachers will gain a set of concrete practices to help their students: ask and answer meaningful questions, engage family members in discussion on current issues, become intelligent consumers of media, and make powerful, persuasive presentations and arguments. These activities will help enhance and extend current issue discussions, with a specific focus on student directed inquiry, engagement with the family and community, and student action. Through a series of guided exercises and activities, students will build a foundation and context to meaningfully engage with local, state, and national policy issues, and will have the option to complete a final project on an issue of interest.
- 3. Review Unit Plans and Develop Strategies for Future Engagement:** Teachers will continue to use standards as well as scope and sequence documents to incorporate the discussion of current issues and political values into their communities. With guidance from Close Up Trainers, teacher will revise a current unit plan to meaningfully integrate current issue discussions and the examination of political values in their curriculum. At the conclusion of this component, teachers will share their best ideas with peers in order to learn from each other and to hold each other accountable to future action.