



CIVICS IN ACTION

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENGAGED CITIZENS

NEW HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW REPORT ON CIVICS

The U.S. Chamber Foundation commissioned a Harvard Business Review white paper, **The Business Case for Civics Education**, that examines the state of civics and why improving it is so important to the nation's well-being. The report shows that while more education is one part of the issue, so is increasing the level of respect that people have for disparate views, compromise, and each other. In sum, the report captures three themes:

- Collaboration and other 21st century skills are needed in the workplace to foster the respectful behavior that is practiced through civil discourse, collaboration, and compromise.
- Business success is built on the bringing together of people from diverse backgrounds to work together to advance shared goals and outcomes.
- There is a critical need for businesses, nonprofit foundations, and educational institutions to provide more experiential ways to teach civics as a supplement to teacher's efforts in the classroom.

In the 21st century, citizens need to possess politically relevant knowledge and exhibit skills, such as communication, compromise, respect, and empathy.

According to a 2011 report published by the Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, "There is considerable overlap between the skills acquired as part of civic learning and the skills required in employment," the report states. "So, students receiving high quality civic learning score higher on a broad range of 21st century competencies than those without." However, schools are presented with challenges to delivering civic education in the classroom. In particular, educators worry about repercussions of teaching controversial issues in the classroom, particularly during a hyper-polarized political period. Adding to the challenges presented in schools, the nation is also witnessing tremendous polarizing effects social media is having on political and social discourse.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: CLOSE UP'S WORK

Close Up's programs and resources provide opportunities to develop the next generation of engaged citizens. We depend on philanthropic partners to help support Close Up's work to serve communities that have the least access to civic engagement opportunities. Below are Close Up opportunities that help us serve students and teachers from across the country.

Programs: Close Up conducts Washington, D.C.-based and local programs which help students discuss and debate current issues with peers from across the country; gain insights from policy, media, and advocacy experts; engage with elected officials and Members of Congress; and participate in legislative simulations. In addition to schools, Close Up partners with organizations and businesses to develop special program opportunities, including: Bank of America, American Bar Association, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Georgetown University, and ACLU.

Professional Development: Close Up's Professional Development is based on our methodology and expertise in helping middle and high school students engage with controversial issues. The professional development is designed to help teachers practice strategies to facilitate classroom discussions in our highly-polarized environment and gain access to non-partisan resources and lesson plans that guide student thinking and skill development.

Classroom Resources: Close Up provides valuable classroom resources that help students and teachers investigate current events and long-standing debates, develop real-world skills for community engagement, and research and understand the critical issues facing our democracy. The corresponding lesson plans help students critically think about issues by using non-partisan resources, develop media literacy skills, and engage in civil discourse as they discuss and debate current issues with their peers.

Classroom to Classroom Engagement: Close Up is developing a new online platform, MisMatch, that will help connect classrooms across the country. Paired with Close Up resources, MisMatch leverages technology to expand the opportunity for students to learn and engage with peers from different communities and backgrounds.

Close Up has a proven track record of providing opportunities to prepare a new generation of community-minded and engaged citizens.

CLOSE UP'S MISSION

The mission of the non-profit, non-partisan Close Up Foundation is to inform, inspire and empower young people to understand and embrace the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship.

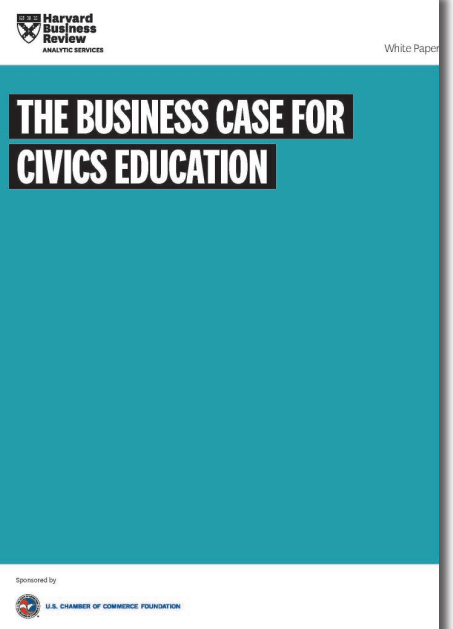
Since 1971, Close Up has served more than 900,000 students and teachers from across the country. Close Up partners with schools and organizations across the country to provide experiential civic education programs, professional development for educators, and classroom resources.



Typically, GDP is highest in countries that have the most stable political systems. So it's important never to take our political system for granted, and that means—among many other things—we need to ensure strong civics programs in our schools.

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[Download the full white paper](#)

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