

CIVIC VOICES & CIVIC LEADERS

CLOSE UP[®]
WASHINGTON DC

DISTRICT-WIDE CIVIC LITERACY PROGRAM

CASE STUDY: PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MD)

GOAL

Combat pandemic-related learning and literacy loss by helping middle school and high school students develop civic literacy and skills, engage in their community, discuss current issues, take part in public speaking activities, and work with tutors to improve their scores in persuasive and argumentative writing. Design and implement a program at scale that accomplishes these goals.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Close Up created a district-wide program with separate curricula for middle school and high school students. The program launched as an after-school, full-semester program and developed into a week-long program. Students worked with staff in a series of large-group discussions and simulations, and small-group work for feedback and coaching.

Both the middle school and high school programs were designed to build students' citizenship skills, improve their sense of civic and political efficacy, and develop their persuasive speaking and writing skills. Students focused on:

- **Building Community:** Students engaged in activities to build a sense of community and purpose and identify norms to ensure inclusive, productive discussion.
- **Discussing and Deliberating on Pressing Local Issues:** Students examined local and state issues by engaging with print and television media and discussed possible solutions to those issues.
- **Exploring Different Approaches to Political Persuasion:** Students evaluated speeches, op-eds, social media, and local news to build stronger public speaking and persuasive writing skills.
- **Developing Persuasive Speeches and Presentations about Current National Issues:** Students identified national issues that mattered to them, considered multiple perspectives, and practiced expository writing by crafting persuasive speeches and presentations.



**ALIGNED
WITH
THE COLLEGE,
CAREER, AND CIVIC
LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK AND
ITS COMMITMENT TO INQUIRY,
DELIBERATION, AND THE EXPERIENCES
OF CIVIC LIFE**

OUTCOMES

Close Up administered pre- and post-program surveys and assessments and developed reports to evaluate the program. Close Up has engaged 2,365 students (1,402 middle school, 963 high school) in PGCPs through the Civic Voices and Civic Leaders programs.

The program had two goals: (1) to increase students' civic and political knowledge and efficacy, and (2) to improve students' persuasive writing skills. To measure the first goal, Close Up conducted pre- and post-program surveys. To measure the second goal, students completed pre- and post-program assessments.

The following outcomes stem from three program sessions in the summer of 2022.

- **Goal 1:** Data from both the middle school and high school programs indicate significant growth in students' civic attachment and political efficacy. A total of 365 students (207 middle school, 158 high school) completed pre- and post-program surveys, showing strong growth in eight out of the nine survey items. Students were significantly more likely to strongly agree with the following statements after the program than they were before the program:
 - » I have the power to make a difference in my community.
 - » I feel I can understand what is going on in politics and government.
 - » I feel confident when I talk about my own political interests or beliefs.
 - » I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.
- **Goal 2:** Among the 376 students (217 middle school, 159 high school) who completed pre- and post-program assessments, data suggest the program was successful in improving students' persuasive writing and ability to communicate about political issues. Students saw their average test scores grow by the equivalent of approximately one and a half letter grades.

96%
**OF STUDENTS GAINED
AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MAJOR
ISSUES FACING
THEIR
COMMUNITY**

1.5

**LETTER GRADE
IMPROVEMENT IN
CIVIC LITERACY
SKILLS**

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