

# ENGAGING IN CIVIL DISCOURSE & DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW



The young people of America are coming of age at a trying time, one that has been too often defined by political polarization and a lack of understanding and cooperation across differences. In this national landscape, the skills and practices of civil discourse and deliberative dialogue are more essential than ever.

Deliberation is a key to understanding public policy issues from multiple perspectives, to making informed decisions about how to resolve those issues, and to acting cooperatively in the best interests of communities nationwide. With 50 years of experience in nonpartisan, issue-centered education, Close Up has designed programming to help schools bring deliberative dialogue to their student body. This **two-part series for students** includes an initial facilitation training for student leaders (and/or faculty members) followed by an opportunity for students to participate in a community-wide deliberation. Session details are outlined below.

### FACILITATION TRAINING FOR STUDENT LEADERS (2 HOURS)

This training is designed for a group of student leaders to develop skills for facilitating deliberative discussions with their peers. Student leaders will examine what it means to be a strong, nonpartisan facilitator. We recommend training one facilitator per 12-15 students. The training will encompass:

- **A Facilitator's Role in Deliberations:** Student leaders will be introduced to general practices and principles of facilitation, including how to bring unheard perspectives and hesitant students into discussions.
- **Modeling Deliberation:** Student leaders will take part in a deliberation about a community issue or policy-related issue, then review facilitation guides and materials to prepare to lead their peers in small-group discussions.
- **Becoming Civic Ambassadors:** Student leaders will receive resources to help them tackle issues in their schools or communities, including materials to conduct a school or neighborhood inventory, do a root cause analysis, and identify pathways for action.

### LARGE-GROUP STUDENT DELIBERATION (2 HOURS; MINIMUM OF 30 STUDENTS)

Close Up will guide the whole group through an introduction to deliberation and its important role in solving community issues. Student leaders will then have the chance to practice the skills they developed in the facilitation training, by leading their own small groups in deliberation of policy issues or community scenarios.

- **Why Deliberate?** What value does deliberation bring to a community and individuals? Close Up staff will lead a 30-minute large-group introduction that helps to build context and rationale for the small-group discussions.
- **Small-Group Deliberations:** In groups of 12-15, students will consider a series of policy proposals or challenging community scenarios and work together to prioritize solutions. *For a policy deliberation, students will need to complete a pre-reading assignment. The community deliberations do not require any advance preparation.*
- **Reflection:** Students will come back together for a Close Up-led reflection on the deliberative process and consider ways this type of discussion can be used in future contexts.

*This programming will be held in person only. Deliberation topics can be customized to meet the goals and objectives of individual schools or districts.*

### ABOUT THE CLOSE UP FOUNDATION

Close Up is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, civic education organization that informs, inspires, and empowers young people to become active citizens. Since 1971, we have partnered with school districts nationwide to serve more than one million students and educators through experiential learning programs in our nation's capital and in local communities, professional development, and curriculum design and consulting. Our goal is to connect what students learn in class to the real world around them and help them articulate their own views, listen to those of others, and engage with people of different backgrounds with tolerance and understanding. To learn more, visit [www.CloseUp.org](http://www.CloseUp.org).