

CLOSE UP CIVIL DISCOURSE CREDENTIAL

DEVELOPING & MEASURING DURABLE SKILLS



Educators are currently facing a pressing responsibility: to ensure that students are prepared not only for college and the workforce, but for active and responsible participation in our democratic society. Increasingly, the answer lies in **emphasizing competency-based education** and **the development of durable skills**—those essential, transferable abilities that are relevant across professions. These skills include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, empathy, and ethical reasoning.

The Close Up Foundation is developing the [Civil Discourse Credential](#) on that foundation. Based on our 50+ years of experience in working with young people from all backgrounds, the credential guides high school students through a series of exercises, activities, and experiences to develop highly needed durable skills such as **analytical thinking, media literacy, and the ability to productively engage with multiple perspectives**.

CIVIL DISCOURSE CREDENTIAL OVERVIEW

The Civil Discourse Credential focuses on high school students' competencies across three domains: **(1) Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy; (2) Communicating Across Difference; and (3) Analyzing Social and Political Issues**. These skills and dispositions are in high demand: in classrooms, where they have the power to enhance participation and engagement; in college admissions; on university campuses; in the workplace; in politics and government; and in our everyday lives and decision-making processes.

The credential provides a set of clear criteria to demonstrate proficiency in a range of vital discourse skills, including: identifying misinformation, facilitating dialogue in diverse groups, accounting for personal biases, exploring competing viewpoints on complex issues, analyzing policy, and more. In addition to the specific criteria laid out to learn each of these skills, the credential provides a series of recommended activities and resources for students and educators to use, all tracked through a Learning Record hosted by Mastery Transcript Consortium. Students might analyze the use of political rhetoric by elected officials, design resources with a multipartisan perspective on a politically charged topic, or facilitate a structured deliberation with peers to address a community issue.

The credential criteria, resources, and activities are firmly rooted in Close Up's mission to empower young people to be active and informed citizens. Nonpartisanship and a willingness to engage with differing views are cornerstones of Close Up's approach to civic education and underpin the skills and outcomes students are intended to gain by achieving the credential.

CIVIL DISCOURSE CREDENTIAL PILOT PROGRAM

To begin implementation in high school classrooms, Close Up launched the Civil Discourse Credential Pilot Program in the summer of 2025. Pilot educators participate in a two-day training institute in Washington, D.C., to gain an understanding of, model, and practice the credential lessons and activities. Throughout the school year, they will attend monthly coaching sessions and provide valuable written feedback to help Close Up refine the credential and prepare for nationwide scaling.

Thus far, the pilot cohort of educators includes **58 teachers from 30 public, charter, and independent schools across 17 states**, including major school districts and networks such as Atlanta Public Schools, Harmony Public Schools, and Miami-Dade Public Schools. In the first year of the pilot program, we anticipate reaching over 1,000 students nationwide.

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.

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PILOT PROGRAM PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Atlanta Public Schools (Ga.)
Bronxville High School (N.Y.)
Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy Charter
High School (N.Y.)
Cannon School (N.C.)
Cedar Lane High School (Va.)
Chesapeake Math and IT Academy (Md.)
Claremont International High School (N.Y.)
Gulliver Preparatory School (Fla.)
Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District
(Mass.)
Harmony Public Schools (Texas)
John R. Lewis High School (Va.)
Madison High School (Va.)
Northport Public Schools (Mich.)
Leland Public Schools (Mich.)

Metairie Park Country Day School (La.)
Miami-Dade Public Schools (Fla.)
Newton North High School (Mass.)
Norfolk Collegiate School (Va.)
Oregon Episcopal School (Ore.)
Portsmouth High School (R.I.)
Princeton Day School (N.J.)
Scarsdale High School (N.Y.)
Shady Side Academy (Pa.)
The Berkeley Carroll School (N.Y.)
The Blake School (Minn.)
The Grayson School (Pa.)
The Kinkaid School (Texas)
Tolleson Union High School (Ariz.)
Trinity-Pawling School (N.Y.)
Wooster School (Conn.)