

CLOSE UP CIVIL DISCOURSE CREDENTIAL

EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM



Building on our 50+ years of working with schools to create a culture of civil discourse, Close Up is developing a **Civil Discourse Credential** for high school students that focuses on competencies across three domains: (1) Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy; (2) Communicating Across Difference; and (3) Analyzing Social and Political Issues.



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This innovative credential guides 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. Within each domain, there is a set of competencies and corresponding rubrics that outline learner progressions (moving from emerging to advanced) and supporting curriculum and assessments to guide and assess students' development as they build mastery. Progress is tracked through a Learning Record hosted by Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC), an ETS company.

WHAT IS THE EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM?

The pilot program will engage a cohort of educators who are eager to implement the curriculum in their schools and create a next generation of young people with the skills and attitudes necessary for a deliberative democracy. Educators who participate will be the first to implement the curriculum in schools and have a chance to provide feedback to help shape the credential.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF EDUCATORS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE PILOT PROGRAM?

- **Professional Development Institute:** Pilot educators will participate in a two-day institute (spring 2026) in Washington, D.C., where they will (1) attend a series of PD workshops to better understand, model, and practice the Civil Discourse Credential lessons and activities; (2) analyze and discuss the rubrics and competencies to build a shared language and a deeper understanding of how student mastery is defined; (3) learn how to use the MTC platform; and (4) build relationships with fellow pilot educators.
- **Civil Discourse Credential Implementation:** Participants must implement the Civil Discourse Credential in one or multiple classrooms during the 2025-26 school year. Close Up will provide all curriculum materials and access to the MTC platform.
- **Monthly Cohort Sessions:** Each month, Close Up will run a synchronous online session during which instructional coaches and curriculum designers will provide additional support and gather informal feedback from participating educators.
- **Formal Feedback:** At the conclusion of the pilot program year, Close Up will seek written feedback from the cohort of pilot educators about the curriculum, rubrics, and competencies to inform the final version of the credential before it is shared with schools and districts nationwide.

WHAT IS THE MTC PLATFORM? WHY ARE WE USING IT FOR THE CIVIL DISCOURSE CREDENTIAL?

We believe promoting deliberative discourse in classrooms nationwide is essential and that MTC offers the best platform to practice, document, and assess mastery of these durable civil discourse skills. The MTC platform provides a more meaningful assessment of students' abilities, moving beyond traditional grading systems. By focusing on mastery and evidence of learning, the Civil Discourse Credential will offer colleges and employers a deeper understanding of a student's capabilities and allow each student's unique strengths, abilities, interests, and histories to be fostered, understood, and celebrated.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE | SPRING 2026

INSTITUTE DETAILS

Over the course of two days in Washington, D.C., participants will:

- Explore the theoretical and empirical foundations of the Civil Discourse Credential approach.
- Examine the competencies and rubrics that will be used to assess student mastery.
- Gain an understanding of the prepared curriculum (lessons and units) intended to introduce students to, and allow them to practice, the competencies.
- Review the suggested assignments that teachers can use for both formative and summative assessment.
- Explore the tools for students and educators in the MTC portal and engage in practice scoring sessions to ensure rigor and equity across participating schools.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

DAY 1

12:00–1:00pm **Lunch and Registration**

1:00 **Opening Plenary Session:** Why is civil discourse important? Why focus on competencies instead of knowledge, dispositions, or behaviors?

2:15 **Workshop:** What are the civil discourse competencies (so far)? How do we choose them and how do we define them?

3:30 **Reflection & Feedback:** What competencies are missing? What did you expect to see that was not included?

4:15 **Domain Deep Dive Workshop—Digital Citizenship & Media Literacy:** Explore the rubrics, classroom resources, and assessment tools that support this civic domain.

6:00 **Cohort Dinner (Optional)**

DAY 2

8:00–9:00am **Breakfast**

9:00 **Domain Deep Dive Workshop—Communication Across Difference:** Explore the rubrics, classroom resources, and assessment tools that support this civic domain.

10:45 **Break**

11:00 **Using the MTC Portal:** Examine the website and tools available to educators to explain the transcript and learning record to students and other stakeholders, and practice the process of tracking student progress.

12:15 **Lunch**

1:30 **Domain Deep Dive Workshop—Analyzing Social and Political Issues:** Explore the rubrics, classroom resources, and assessment tools that support this civic domain.

3:15 **Final Plenary Session—Reflection, Feedback & Ongoing Support:** What does continued engagement with the pilot look like? When are future meetings, and how else can Close Up and MTC support you?

4:00 **End of Day**

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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.

ABOUT THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY LAB

The Deliberative Democracy Lab at Stanford University is devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through Deliberative Polling®. The method of Deliberative Polling has been used in over 50 countries around the world through over 150 projects, at varying levels of government and society. To learn more, visit <https://deliberation.stanford.edu/>.

ABOUT MASTERY TRANSCRIPT CONSORTIUM

Mastery Transcript Consortium®, an ETS company, is a national and global nonprofit membership organization that helps make mastery learning—or competency-based education—available to all learners. Because this approach does not generate traditional metrics, we co-create uniquely flexible and scalable learning records to solve the challenge of credentialing. MTC accelerates equitable access to and widespread implementation of mastery learning models, empowering students to showcase competencies and share evidence of their learning. To learn more, visit mastery.org.