



CIVIL DISCOURSE LAB JULY 8-10, 2026 | WASHINGTON, D.C.



As we prepare to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, and fulfill our roles as citizens by examining and discussing the issues driving the midterm elections, **it is a vital time for schools to engage—or reengage—in the practice of civil discourse.** How do we create school communities that are open to diverse perspectives, with faculty who can navigate difficult conversations fairly and effectively, and that provide students with meaningful opportunities to communicate, deliberate, and actively listen to each other?

For this year's [Civil Discourse Lab](#), Close Up is inviting **school teams of educators—both teachers and administrators—to** join us for a multi-day institute in July. As teachers gain the training and skills to implement our Civil Discourse Credential in their classrooms, administrators will focus on supporting teachers and fostering a schoolwide culture of civil discourse. Together, both tracks of educators will witness a powerful model of deliberation in practice—by observing students at the concurrent [NextGen Roundtable: Decision 2026](#).

CIVIL DISCOURSE LAB: CLASSROOM EDUCATOR TRACK

This track is intended for classroom teachers, particularly those who teach government, history, social studies, humanities, or English.

At a time when government and current events touch every part of our lives, true civic education must move beyond memorizing facts and towards the development of durable skills. Close Up has developed the [Civil Discourse Credential](#) on that principle. The credential guides high school students through exercises, activities, and experiences to develop highly needed durable skills such as critical thinking, communication, media and AI literacy, and the ability to productively engage with multiple perspectives. It focuses on three domains: **(1) Analyzing Political and Social Issues; (2) Communicating Across Difference; and (3) Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy.** Within each domain are competencies and rubrics that outline learner progressions, as well as supporting curriculum and assessments to guide and evaluate students' development as they build mastery. Progress is tracked through a Learning Record hosted by Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC), an ETS company.

In this track, Close Up will guide teachers through workshops surrounding the implementation of the credential in classrooms. They will:

- Build an understanding of and model the credential lessons and activities.
- Learn how to implement the curriculum in classrooms or co-curricular activities.
- Explore the tools for students and educators available in the MTC portal.



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CIVIL DISCOURSE LAB: ADMINISTRATOR TRACK

This track is intended for heads of school, principals, administrators, and division leaders.

In this track, Close Up will guide administrators through workshops surrounding the practice of civil discourse and deliberation. They will consider questions such as:

- What are the foundations of open inquiry and discourse? What does this look like across a school community?
- How can school leaders foster a climate that helps students understand and engage with a variety of perspectives, including perspectives not held by students in the building?
- How can school leaders help young people learn to communicate across differences and acknowledge that alternative perspectives have value?
- How can school leaders create a robust plan for navigating difficult conversations with faculty, parents, students, and the broader school community?

PROGRAM DETAILS

Dates: Wednesday, July 8, to Friday, July 10, 2026

Location: Crystal Gateway Marriott, 1700 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA 22202

Conference Fee: \$1,495 per person. Hotel rooms are available onsite and can be arranged through Close Up for an additional fee of \$250 per night.

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. To learn more, visit www.CloseUp.org.



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