



Facing History & Ourselves' Approach to Civic Education

Rationale: A Call to Action

Schools have always played an important role in preparing young people to participate in democracy. However, in recent decades, competing priorities for the time and attention of schools has left little room for the civic preparation of young people.

During this pivotal moment for our democracy, the civic mission of schools is more important than ever.

Our democracy and others around the world aren't faltering simply because people don't understand their constitutions or the mechanisms of government. Democracy is also undermined by bigotry, hate, and disconnection; by a failure to understand that people make choices and choices make history; and by increasing political and cultural polarization that renders people ill-equipped to talk with each other about issues that matter.

A recent study showed that US high schools are increasingly challenged to prepare students to participate in a diverse democracy in the face of growing political polarization. Other research shows racial and economic disparities when it comes to young people's access to high-quality civic learning opportunities. **Now more than ever, educators need high quality resources and strong support for teaching civics and ensuring it's equitably available.**

For decades, Facing History has helped young people develop the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to understand and participate in democracy. Our resources—from our historical case studies to our collection exploring current events—teach students to discern facts from misinformation; connect history with the world around them; engage empathetically and constructively with others who differ from them in identity, experience, and perspective; and collaboratively explore solutions to complex problems.

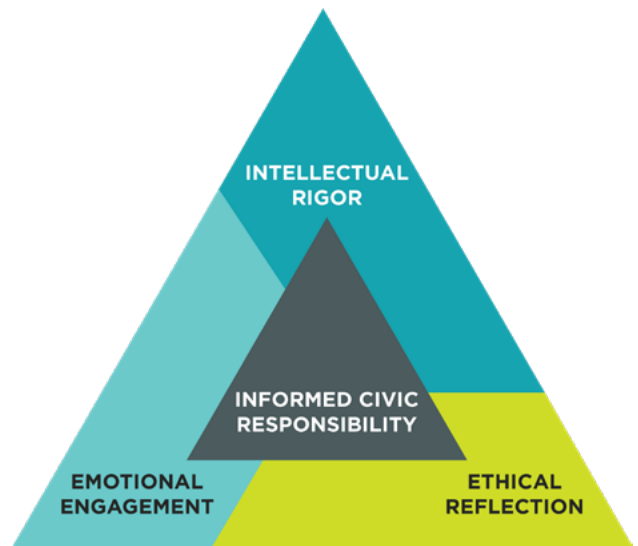
“ The great part about Facing History is that we don't become paralyzed by the past. We look forward and think about how we can choose to participate.”

- Facing History Alum

Our Unique Approach

At the center of Facing History's work is cultivating students' informed civic responsibility. Building civic responsibility engages the heart, mind, and conscience through intellectual rigor, emotional engagement, and ethical reflection. Our approach is holistic and integrated. We recognize that deep civic learning requires more than curriculum; it is shaped by students' identities, social-emotional development, and school culture and climate. Facing History believes that civic education is an important avenue to develop community members who ethically and actively participate in society and possess:

- tolerance, empathy, and respect for human dignity;
- the skills to seek truth and communicate across difference;
- a capacity for ethical reflection;
- a sense of the common good rooted in equity and justice;
- a belief they can make a difference;
- an understanding that each person's choices matter; and
- a commitment to participate.



Components of Our Approach

Drawing on Facing History's [learning journey](#) as well as our [pedagogical strategies](#), the components of our approach to civic education include opportunities where students **explore**, **learn**, and **participate** and, ultimately, develop informed civic responsibility.



EXPLORE | Civic Identity Exploration and Civic Reflection

Facing History centers students' identities, voices, and lived experiences as they develop civic agency and responsibility. We engage students in making connections with the societal issues that shape our world today and in ongoing ethical reflection about their role as civic actors.



LEARN | Civic Inquiry & Historical Analysis and Civic Discussion

Facing History builds students' civic knowledge and understanding by engaging them in inquiry and analysis of the complexities of history, human experience, and societal issues. By discussing current events, controversial issues, past and present dilemmas, and literary texts, students deeply explore issues that shape civic life today.



PARTICIPATE | Civic Voice and Civic Engagement

Facing History creates opportunities for students to learn how to share their perspectives, exercise their voice, and raise awareness in informed and ethical ways using a variety of formats and media. We also support students to identify civic issues that are relevant to their lives and their communities, and create and carry out informed and ethical plans to address them.

Preparing students to participate in society is critically important in this time of democratic decline and increasing political polarization. Despite these distressing trends, there is widespread agreement about the critical role of educators in helping young people understand lessons from history to navigate our world today. **The need for civic education and the evidence of its positive impact is clear. Facing History's unique and holistic approach helps cultivate young people's civic identity and empowers them to actively and thoughtfully participate in a democratic society.**



A PROVEN APPROACH

Facing History significantly increases:

- students' tolerance for others with different political views
- their capacity for civil discourse
- their belief that they can make a difference.

Facing History students score higher than peers on a civic responsibility index. Our alumni are more civically involved than their peers: more likely to vote, to participate in civic or community groups, and to discuss current events.

How We Know it Works

Our most important measures of success are meaningful academic and civic outcomes for students. In studies conducted over the past 20 years, students report the following as a result of their experiences with Facing History:

Academic Engagement

94%

Students in a Facing History classroom were 94% more likely than their peers to report that the class motivated them to learn.

Civic Agency

93%

of Facing History students agreed that it is important to work for positive social change.

School Culture

95%

of students in Facing History partner schools have observed ways that Facing History positively impacts their school community.

