

Summary of Amicus Brief prepared by Generation Citizen and Mikva Challenge

*Leading organizations providing hands-on “action civics” instruction offer proven framework for effective, equitable civics education.*

Access to an education preparing students, particularly disadvantaged, marginalized students, to participate in the democratic process is a necessary predicate to preserving the individual and collective liberties and rights afforded by the US Constitution. Yet access to civics education has steadily declined over the past several decades. As a result, American students demonstrate dangerously low levels of aptitude regarding civics. And while the ability to distinguish facts from misinformation is an increasingly important civic skill, American students from middle school through college have difficulties discerning the difference. Our country’s crisis of civic education also manifests in low voter turnout compared to other countries, even in 2020.

Key to solving these problems is teaching and practicing core competencies essential for participating in democracy. These “civic skills” comprise communication, collaboration, and critical analysis of political information. Opportunities to practice these skills, often obtained through extracurricular activities, are less prevalent in schools serving low-income students and students of color. These deficiencies, coupled with lack of civic literacy instruction, locks these groups in a civic death spiral in which they remain chronically underserved by government.

It is the experience of *Amici* that “action civics,” in which young people learn about the public policy process by taking action on specific issues in their communities, offers a framework for highly effective civics education that imparts core civic knowledge and skills through authentic civic experiences. This brief provides a thorough introduction to specific action civics programs provided by *Amici* that have transformed students, including those from marginalized groups, from apathetic participants to motivated, effective civic contributors. *Amici* also present objective research evidence supporting the potential benefits of expanding access to action civics broadly and equitably nationwide.