

# **Education as a Human Right: Designing Public School Systems that Develop Civic Participation, Counter Political Polarization, and Cultivate Democracy**

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## **Abstract**

The Founding Fathers of the United States maintained that an educated populace, equipped with good character, a grasp of political and social issues, and prepared to participate in civic life was key to the success of the democracy, but left us with the question of how to design our schools to educate students for participation in civic life and what the role of individual identity, culture, and other belief systems are in that work. That is the source of conflict and polarization that guides this paper, as we engage a group of students, teachers, families, and administrators in answering the questions 1) How can we support all of our students to be engaged members of a diverse, global community? 2) How can we create a space in which everyone can be their whole and complete self, and feel welcomed, included, and valued, as they are? 3) How do we address, rather than ignore, the global and political conflicts that divide and polarize our communities, leaning into the hard conversations?

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