

10 CAREER SKILLS THAT STUDENTS LEARN IN CIVICS CLASS

In a rapidly shifting labor market, a student's ability to build consensus across lines of difference and drive systemic solutions is their greatest competitive advantage. We cultivate these skills through project-based civics, recognizing the community as a laboratory for leadership. By problem-solving in real-world contexts today, our students develop the agency and resilience required to become the indispensable innovators of tomorrow's workforce.

*These 10 Core Skills are synthesized from "Experiential Civic Learning for American Democracy—A Portrait of the Field" (Allen et al., Council on Civic Strength Task Force on Experiential Civic Learning, May 2025).
For additional information, contact the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program.*

#1: Critical Thinking

Analyzing information and arguments to make informed decisions

Why it matters for careers: Essential for problem-solving, strategic planning, and leadership roles across all industries

Why it matters for life: Enables sound decision-making about finances, health, relationships, and major life choices



#2: Effective Communication

Expressing ideas clearly and listening actively, including through public speaking and debate

Why it matters for careers: The #1 skill employers seek, critical for interviews, presentations, client relationships, and advancement

Why it matters for life: Foundation for building relationships, advocating for yourself, and navigating conflicts



#3: Community Engagement

Participating in local activities, understanding community needs

Why it matters for careers: Develops professional networks, demonstrates initiative, builds leadership experience, and creates stakeholder buy-in essential for leading change

Why it matters for life: Creates sense of belonging, purpose, and ability to improve your surroundings



#4: Collaboration

Working with others to achieve common goals

Why it matters for careers: Nearly every job requires teamwork, this skill determines who gets hired and promoted

Why it matters for life: Essential for family relationships, community involvement, and achieving shared objectives



10 CIVIC SKILLS EVERY CHILD NEEDS

#5: Problem-Solving

Identifying issues and developing solutions

Why it matters for careers: Drives innovation, entrepreneurship, and value creation in any role

Why it matters for life: Helps navigate challenges, overcome obstacles, and create positive change



#6: Perspective Taking

Seeking out alternative perspectives on situations and issues and inhabiting the perspectives of others

Why it matters for careers: Anticipates how decisions impact different stakeholders, strengthens client and colleague relationships, and uncovers blind spots in strategy

Why it matters for life: Builds empathy, reduces conflict, and strengthens all relationships



#7: Structuring Agendas and Running Meetings

Understanding how to shape a deliberative process and drive toward resolution

Why it matters for careers: Key leadership competency that demonstrates organizational ability and executive presence

Why it matters for life: Essential for volunteer leadership, community organizing, and family decision-making



#8: Negotiations and Compromise

Understanding how to work through conflicting interests to a resolution

Why it matters for careers: Critical for sales, management, contracts, partnerships, and workplace conflict resolution

Why it matters for life: Necessary for major purchases, family decisions, and community involvement



#9: Digital Competence

Understanding how to use digital tools to navigate the information landscape and communicate, and to protect oneself from the misuse of those tools

Why it matters for careers: Required for virtually every modern job, from basic operations to advanced analysis

Why it matters for life: Protects against scams, misinformation, and privacy violations while enabling connection



#10: Civil Disagreement

Sharing one's own values & views effectively, understanding and engaging charitably with the values and views of others, and making progress toward mutual understanding and identification of shared solutions

Why it matters for careers: Enables productive debate, diverse team collaboration, and conflict transformation into innovation

Why it matters for life: Allows maintaining relationships across differences and finding common ground in divided times

