



Your Child's Future Starts With These Skills:

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CAREER SKILLS THAT STUDENTS LEARN IN CIVICS CLASS

YOUR CHILD FACES URGENT CHALLENGES

Career uncertainty in an AI economy: Parents everywhere are asking: Will my child be able to get a good job? What skills will AI-proof their career? How do I prepare them for jobs that don't exist yet?

A divided world: Over 60% of Americans find political conversations “stressful and frustrating” ([Pew, 2023](#)). You want your child to navigate disagreement, build bridges, and work with people different from themselves.

The skills gap employers report: Across every industry, from healthcare to technology to skilled trades, employers say candidates lack communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving. These aren't “soft skills.” They determine who gets hired and promoted.

WHAT MOST PARENTS DON'T REALIZE

The skills employers desperately need and the competencies that help young people thrive in life are identical. They are developed most powerfully through experiential civic learning and community problem-solving in schools during the school day.

When your child engages in real-world problem-solving in their school and community, they simultaneously build career readiness, civic capacity, character, and purpose. This is not about choosing between workforce preparation and civic education. They're the same investment in your child's future.



These skills are detailed in the Civic & Workforce Skills Framework, which 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.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

When your child leads a community project in school:

They build: Project management, team leadership, communication, problem-solving, public speaking

Career value: Portfolio-worthy experience demonstrating initiative and impact that differentiates them from other candidates

When your child participates in service-learning during the school day:

They build: Critical thinking, community engagement, ethical reasoning, career exploration, networking

Career value: Connections to mentors, understanding of career pathways, and experience applying knowledge to real problems

When your child engages in community problem-solving:

They build: Collaboration across differences, adaptability, conflict resolution, perspective-taking, civil disagreement

Career value: The ability to work on diverse teams and navigate workplace conflict, skills every employer seeks

THE ADVANTAGES FOR YOUR CHILD

Economic Security

- Problem-solving, communication, & collaboration skills correlate with higher wages across all career fields
- These competencies appear in job postings from entry-level to management positions
- Skills transfer across industries, providing career adaptability in a changing economy

Professional Networks and Opportunities

- Real-world civic experiences connect students with adult mentors, community leaders, and potential employers
- Demonstrated leadership and community impact create competitive resumes
- Early career exploration helps students discover paths aligned with their interests

Purpose, Character, and Confidence

- Exploring community needs helps them discover career paths aligned with their values
- Real accomplishments build confidence and belief in their own abilities
- Practicing ethical decision-making, empathy, and responsibility shapes character
- Connection to something larger than themselves supports meaning and resilience
- Understanding how to create positive change develops purpose-driven leadership

WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A PARENT

WITH SCHOOLS

Advocate for Experiences (Your Most Important Role)

The ultimate goal is getting schools to prioritize experiential civic learning and community problem-solving in the school day. Your voice matters:

Ask about experiential learning opportunities: What real-world projects, service-learning experiences, or community problem-solving happens during the school day?

Inquire about skill development: How is the school explicitly teaching communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and civil disagreement through hands-on practice?

Support civic education programs: Encourage school board and administrators to invest in initiatives that build these skills through authentic, real-world experiences

Volunteer your expertise: Offer your professional knowledge or workplace for student projects, mentorship, or career exploration opportunities

AT HOME

Practice the Skills

Model civil disagreement: Show how to discuss different viewpoints respectfully at family dinners

Ask open-ended questions: Help your child practice critical thinking: "What do you think?" "Why?" "What else?" "What would you do differently?"

Celebrate problem-solving and teamwork: Recognize these as career skills, not just character traits

Encourage community involvement: Support participation in service projects, clubs, and youth organizations

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Create Opportunities

Find youth leadership programs: Look for youth advisory boards, civic organizations, or service groups that practice community problem-solving

Connect your child with mentors: Introduce them to professionals in careers they're interested in

Support community projects: Help them identify local problems they care about and develop solutions