

## Write an op-ed for a local newspaper or blog explaining the need for, and benefits of Action Civics



- **Identify** a newspaper or blog whose readers would be interested in your issue and editors to whom you can submit your op-ed
- **Write** an op-ed that draws readers into caring about the issue, explains why the issue is a problem, and addresses opposing arguments and offers a solution
- **Submit** your op-ed

### Why you should write an op-ed about Action Civics

Writing an op-ed for Action Civics is an important way to mobilize support for bringing student-led, project-based civics education to every classroom in the country. Composing an effective op-ed takes research, an understanding of your intended audience, anticipating and addressing objections to your argument, and crafting a lead to grab the attention of your readers. Here's a way to think about it: op-eds are about communicating a unique perspective within a conventionally recognized format of storytelling or advocacy.

What follows below are guidelines and sample text that can be used to write an op-ed for Action Civics. Ensure that as you write your op-ed, what is below is adjusted to reflect your personal voice and to be appropriate for your local context.

Please share your op-ed on social media using the hashtag #beyondtheballot and email it to us at: [beyondtheballot@generationcitizen.org](mailto:beyondtheballot@generationcitizen.org).

### Op-ed guidelines and sample text

**Lead:** Draw the reader into caring about civics education, particularly Action Civics, with an interesting hook. Hooks can vary widely but common prompts are:

- A human interest story
- Shocking or powerful numbers/statistics
- A focus on local and/or timely issues and how they affect your community

**Sample:** *In recent times, there have been unprecedented cries for a robust revival of civics education. Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, academics, journalists, educators, and students alike have publicly underscored the need for more – and better – civics education in our public schools, whose founding purpose is to educate for citizenship. The tenor of recent elections, and the civic upheavals that have presented themselves in the months since, illustrate the detriment to the strength of America's great democracy that a population unable to engage in deliberative discourse, spot fake news, and name the three branches of government, can be.*

**Problem:** Explain that there is a lack of effective civics education in schools and why this is a problem; include statistics and other relevant evidence and research

**Sample:** *Recent data shows that only 23% of eighth graders nationwide are proficient in civics. Worse, young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities: students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.*

*As a result, 74% of adults cannot name the three branches of government. From middle school through college, students demonstrate challenges in distinguishing real from fake news. Silos between parties are hardening and we are, unfortunately seeing the ramifications in our daily national discourse, our inability to effect bipartisan policies, and of course, our dismal voter turnout rates which put the United States 31 out of 35 of OECD nations.*

**Solution:** Describe what you feel should be done to improve civics education

**Sample:** *Effective civics education is needed to re-engage young people in the local political system and strengthen our democracy today, and for the future. Action Civics, a student-centered, experiential practice in which young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities is a model of this. In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. Comprised of proven practices for civic learning, Action Civics fosters the civic knowledge, skills, and motivation in students that is necessary for lifelong civic participation.*

**Counter-Point(s):** Predict possible arguments that opponents of your issue might raise and explain and provide reasoning for your disagreement

**Sample:** *While most states have at least some civics requirement, required courses are typically limited to just one semester and focus solely on the knowledge component of a civics education. This is not sufficient for preparing our youth to be engaged citizens. Just as students learn both the different of components of a periodic table and the skills required to solve complex scientific problems in science class, students must learn not just the basic civic facts but the skills for solving the pressing problems in our democracy.*

**Conclusion/Call to Action:** Reiterate how and why the reader should support Action Civics

**Sample:** *Educating for citizenship is a foundational responsibility of American public schools. Yet there are insufficient requirements and resources for civics education across the country and as a result, civics class is insufficiently engaging, and insufficiently effective. This is a vital time for a renewed commitment to, and investment in, civics education – starting with Action Civics.*

**Sample op-eds about Action Civics:**

- [Civics Education Shouldn't Put Students to Sleep](#)
- [DeVos, invest in the future of our democracy by focusing on civics](#)