

# EDUCATING FOR Civic Reasoning & Discourse

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# Committee on Civic Reasoning & Discourse

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Why We  
Need  
Preparation  
for Civic  
Reasoning &  
Discourse

Mass Shootings

January 6th

Black Lives Matters

Low Civics Scores

Pandemic & Public Health Engagement

Climate Change

Fight Over Election Results

Social Media Misuse

Political Polarization

# Questions The Report Addresses

- What are the cognitive, social, emotional, ethical, and identity dimensions entailed in civic reasoning and discourse, and how do these dimensions shift across the life course? In particular, how do students develop an understanding of implicit bias and learn to weigh multiple points of view? How do educators understand the demands of conceptual change?
- What can we discover from research on learning and human development to cultivate competencies in civic reasoning and discourse and prepare young people as civic actors?
- What are the broader ecological contexts that influence the ability of our learning systems to support the development of these competencies? How do we create classroom climates and inquiry-oriented curricula that are meaningful to students' civic learning?
- In the context of schooling, what is the role of learning across content areas— literacy/language arts, social studies/history, mathematics, science, digital media, the arts—in developing multiple competencies required for effective civic reasoning and discourse? What are the pedagogical implications in these content areas?
- What supports are needed in terms of policy as well as in the preparation and professional development of teachers and school administrators to design instruction for effective civic reasoning and discourse that supports democratic values and democratic decision making?

# **Complexity of the American Experiment**

## **Creating and sustaining a system of decision making sufficiently elastic to make space for dissent and difference**

- Federal as well as local decision making
- Majority and minority rights
- The inalienable rights of the individual

## **A nation of indigenous populations and immigrants with a contested history, forging a national identity**

- History of African enslavement and war against Indigenous nations
- Navigating questions of citizenship given undocumented populations and sovereign Indigenous nations
- Complex history of contestations over immigration policies and acceptance
- History of communities sustaining national as well as transnational identities

## **Wrestling with these complexities and ethical conundrums across our history**

- No simple histories of leaders who are either simply good or bad

## Key Highlights of This Report (1 of 2)

- Attention to the **interdisciplinary nature** of civic reasoning and discourse
- Conceptualization of the **complex demands of civic reasoning and discourse** that is grounded in research in **learning sciences** and **human development**, including students' identity development, cognitive development, as well as moral and ethical development
- Emphasis on **equitable access** to learning environments that are conducive to student discussion and utilize **project-based** and **inquiry-oriented** approaches
- Focus on civic learning **across the K-12 sector** and **across content areas**
- Attention to the varying definitions of **citizenship** in different historical contexts and across ethnic communities

## Key Highlights of This Report (2 of 2)

- Learning to engage in civic reasoning and discourse should explicitly include strategies to help students **gather, analyze, and thoughtfully circulate information in digital and other media**, including identifying and combating misinformation.
- **Research infrastructures** and other **collaborative partnerships** should be developed to (1) generate up-to-date data on teaching and learning in the area of civic reasoning and discourse and (2) encourage the uptake of a K-12 focus across curriculum areas that facilitates this multi-dimensional understanding of the complexities of learning to engage in civic reasoning and discourse.

# This is not a report about particular political positions

## Political Orientations

- Conservative versus Progressive
  - These are contestable
  - They represent different logics around underlying practices with regard to the scope of government
- Example
  - Do we grow the economy by providing incentives to corporations or by providing direct supports to people in need?

## Value Orientations

- Democratic versus Anti-Democratic
  - Philosophical and ethical foundations
  - Example
    - Senator John McCain during 2008 presidential election responding to woman who claimed Senator Obama was not an American

# Chapters

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Introduction

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Philosophical and Moral Foundations for Research and Practice

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Perspectives from Learning Sciences and Human Development

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A Short History of Civic Education Policy and Practice in the U.S.

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Agency and Resilience in the Face of Challenge as Civic Action

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Structural Inequality, Migration, and Conflict

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Learning Environments and School/Classroom Climate as Supports

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Rethinking Digital Citizenship: Learning About Media, Literacy, and Race in Turbulent Times

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Pedagogical Practices and How Teachers Learn

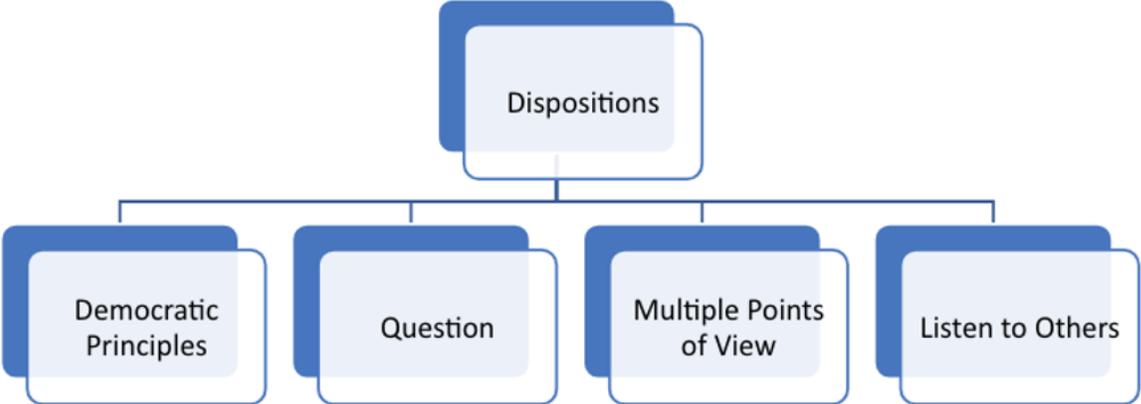
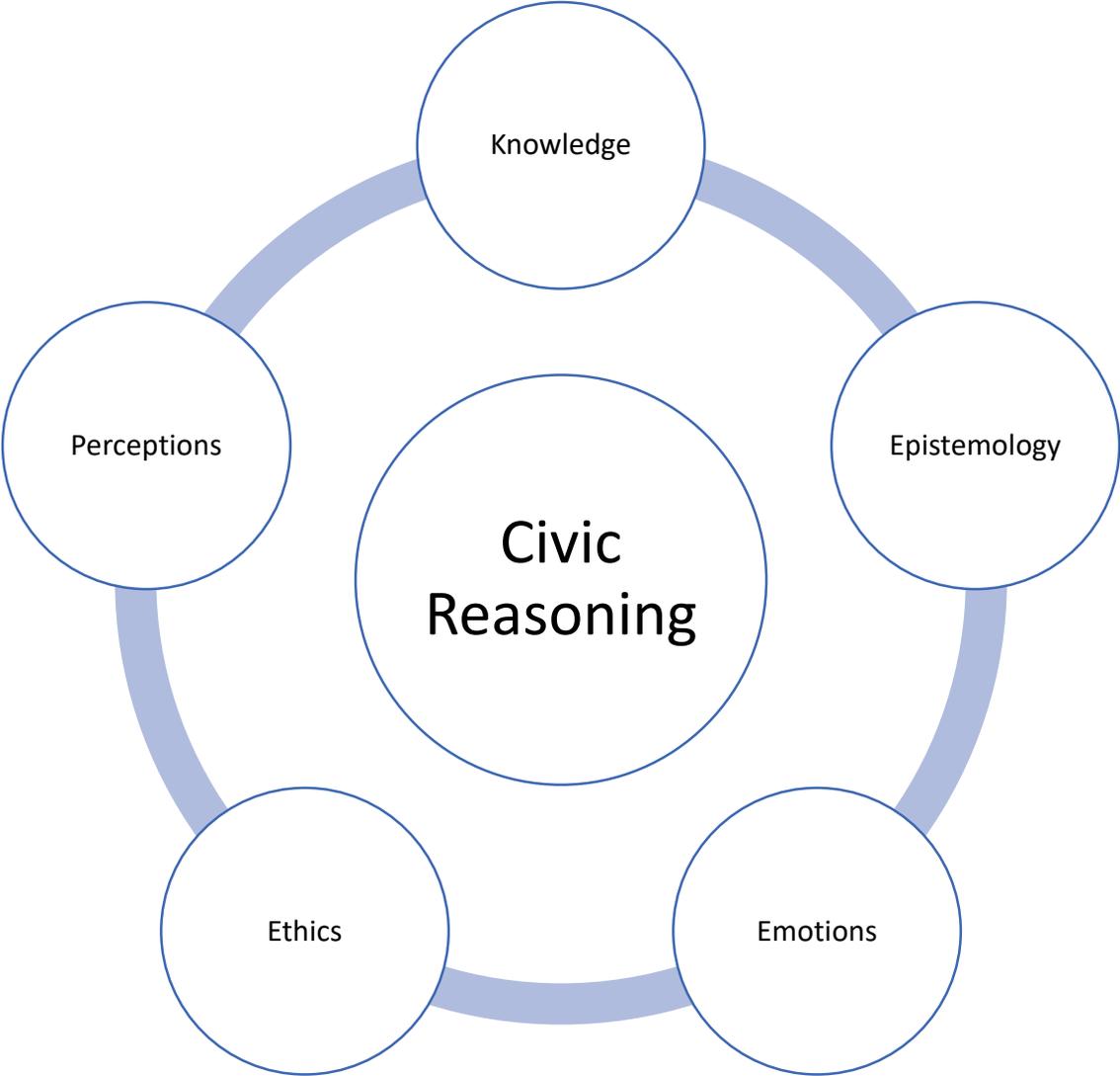
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Recommendations for Practice, Policy, and Research

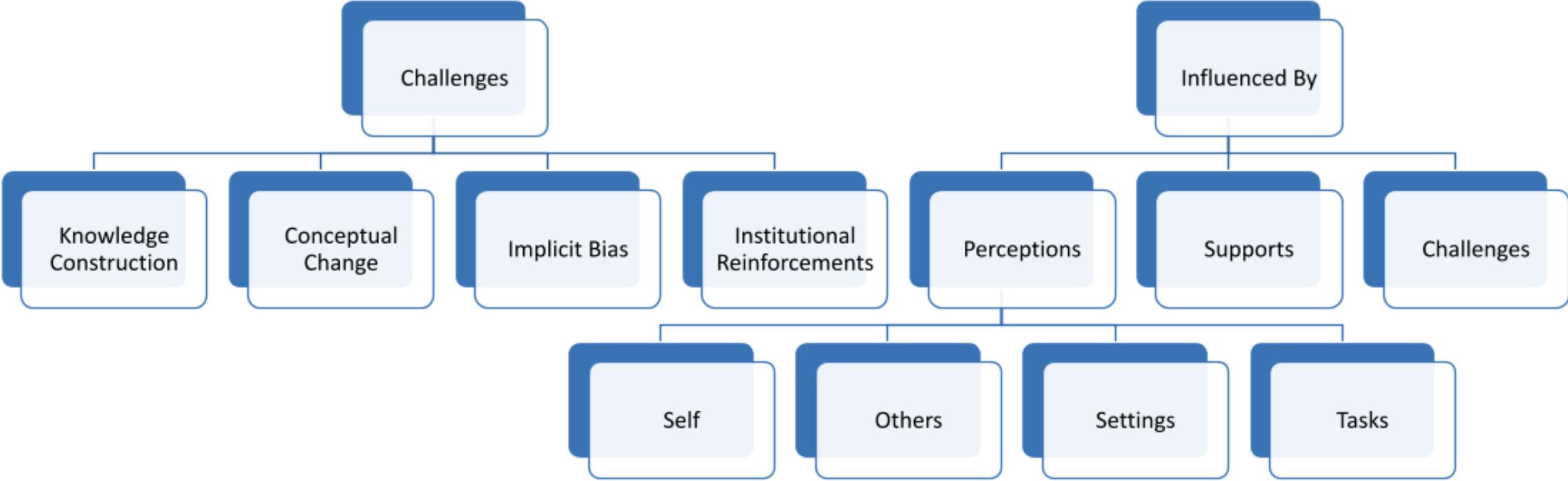
**What do the learning sciences and developmental research tell us about how we should be designing education for civic reasoning and discourse?**

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# Dimensions of Civic Reasoning and Discourse



# Challenges to Civic Reasoning and Discourse



# Developmental Underpinnings of Civic Reasoning and Discourse

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## **Moral Development**

Children form personal moral understandings from a very young age

Moral understandings involve: harm or welfare, fairness or justice, and rights

Moral understanding shifts from early childhood to adolescence: fairness, rights, and social justice become better crystalized

Children can separate self-interest from universal moral judgements

## **Identity Development**

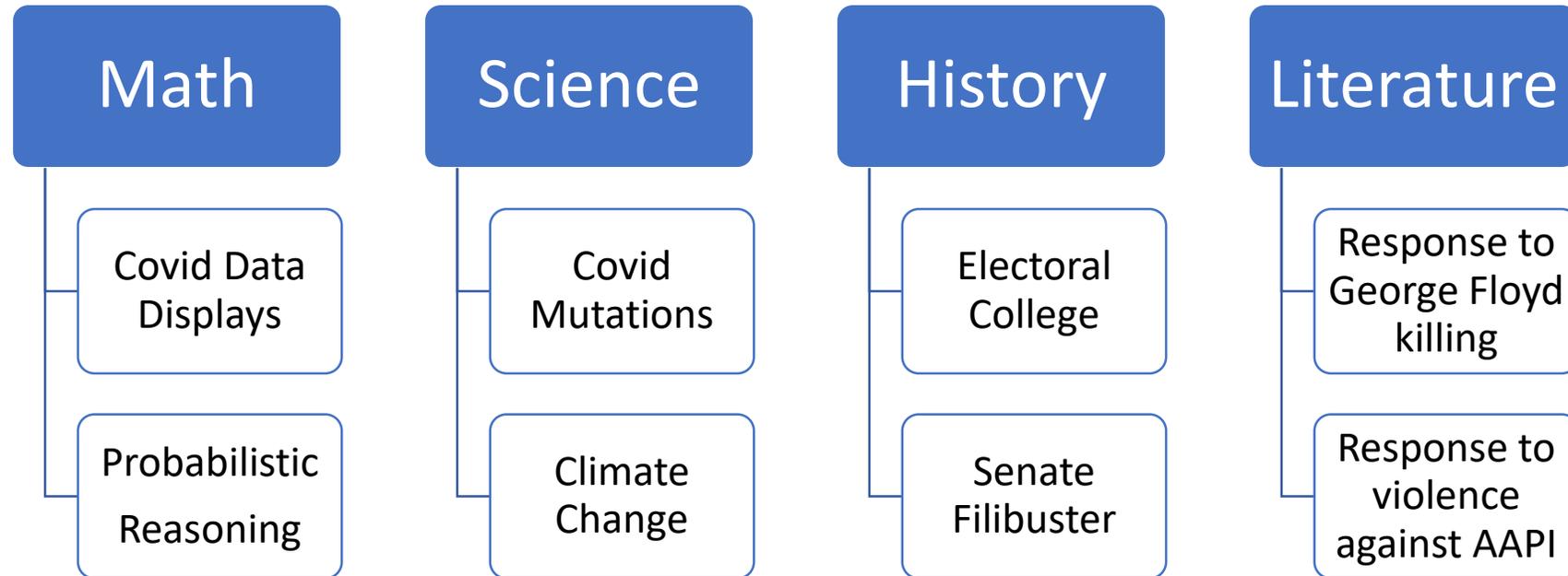
Identity development, an important developmental task, takes place over the life-course, but particularly salient in adolescence

Identity in general and ethnic/racial identity relevant to civic reasoning and discourse

Social and political issues often have at their core issues of identity and belonging

Intersectional identities are complex: race/ethnicity, participation in cultural practices, immigrant status, language, social class matter for how one is positioned

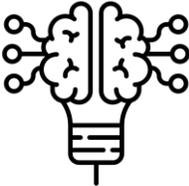
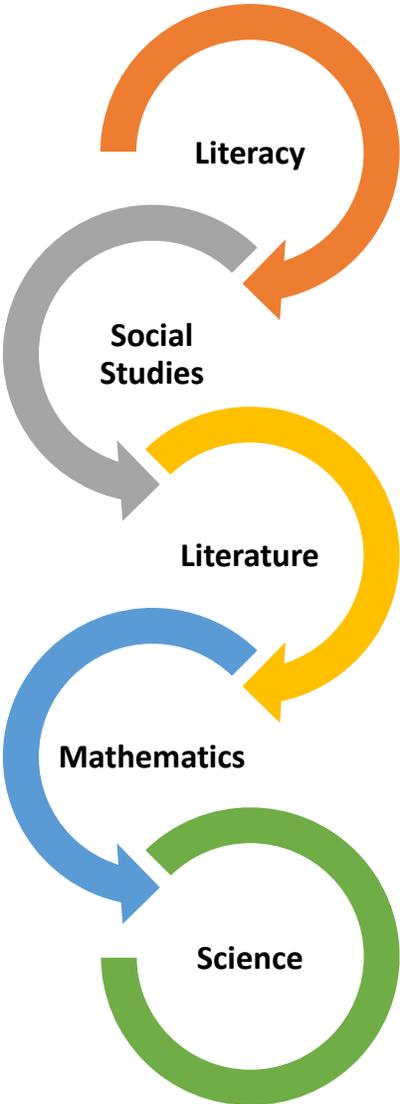
# Challenges in the Public Domain Requiring Civic Reasoning – The Role of Subject Matter Knowledge



**TABLE 2-1** Dimensions of Civic Reasoning

|             | Knowledge  | Dispositions  | Identity  | Ethics  |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|
| Literacy    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critically examine texts</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage complexity</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Filter problem solving through both self-interest and the needs of others</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empathize with others</li></ul>                           |
| Literature  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interrogate multiple worlds</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examine multiple points of view</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wrestle with multiple overlapping identities</li></ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Privilege fairness for all</li></ul>                      |
| Mathematics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use of mathematical data and modeling</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weigh evidence</li><li>• Examine warrants</li><li>• Lifelong research to expand knowledge</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resist stereotypes and homogenizing others</li></ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use ethical principles to drive decision making</li></ul> |
| Science     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand processes underlying natural world</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critically examine point of view and authenticity of sources</li></ul>                              |   |   |
| History     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand geographical, historical, economic, and political processes and forces</li><li>• Understand democratic values</li></ul> |   |   |   |

# Implications for Organizing Learning Within Core Disciplines



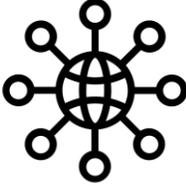
Created by Icongeek28 from Noun Project

**Draw & build on prior knowledge**



Created by brandify from Noun Project

**Provide sense of emotional safety**



Created by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project

**Establish relevance through real-world problems**



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**Build efficacy through scaffolded challenges**



Created by Jamison Wieser from Noun Project

**Support questioning of information sources and evaluating evidence**



Created by Adrien Coquet from Noun Project

**Support questioning of own assumptions**



Created by Magicon from Noun Project

**Wrestle with complex & contradictory ideas**



Created by Nithinan Tatah from Noun Project

**Ensure multiplicity of cultural & ideological perspectives**

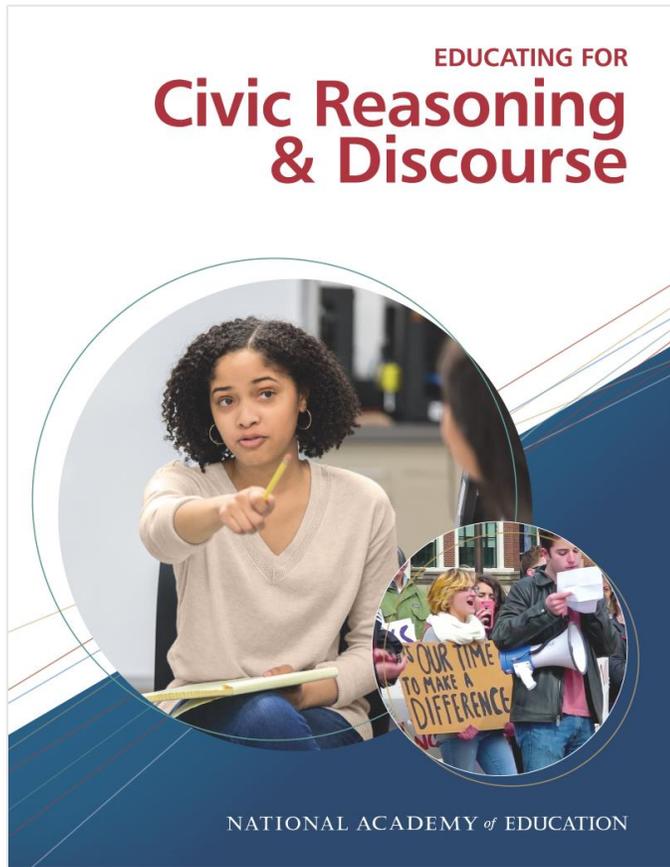
# Intersections Across Reports

Israel and the United States

# The Problem Space

- Each country has a complex history and complex structures of governance
- Centralized versus decentralized educational systems
- Conundrums of sustaining historical cultural communities while simultaneously sustaining national democratic values and practices
- Wrestling with creating support systems for children and adolescence that recognize heterogeneity within communities and the need for practices that are sufficiently dialogic and nimble to address evolving and unanticipated circumstances

# Thank You!



Full Report and Executive Summary  
available at [naeducation.org](https://naeducation.org)