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Teaching Civics to Foster Faith in American Democracy

On July 30th, De La Salle educators Jonathan Waechter and Wilson Martinez joined ~40 educators from 13 Jewish and Catholic middle and high schools from New York and New Jersey to attend an intensive week-long training institute, co-facilitated by **Civic Spirit** and the **Jack Miller Center**.

De La Salle has been selected as an essential member of a cohort of schools leading the way for civic education across the country. The Institute officially begins De La Salle's 3-year commitment to explore and determine the role of civics in schools.

At the Institute, dedicated teachers and administrators delved into American primary sources and engaged in rich conversation about how to teach principles of American democracy, civil discourse, and the responsibilities of citizenship in the context of a religious community with varying political and philosophical views. The educators met with political philosophers, historians, psychologists, media literacy specialists, and literary scholars. They studied works of political theory such as Plato's *Crito*, foundational American texts including the Declaration of Independence, and contemplative literature such as Ralph Ellison's "In a Strange Country". They worked collaboratively to investigate how to revamp civics education for twenty-first century demands.

De La Salle's partnership with Civic Spirit comes at a critical moment. According to a [report](#) from the Tufts University Tisch College of Civic Life, ***young adults are losing faith in American democracy***, and the primary way to address this concern is through meaningful and interactive nonpartisan civic education.

As we prepare our students for high school life and beyond, we want our young adults to feel empowered to participate in and shape their country. We have chosen to work with **Civic Spirit** to provide the pedagogical guidance and resources that our teachers need to ensure we are reaching this goal.

"Father of all nations and ages, we recall the day when our country claimed its place among the family of nations; for what has been achieved we give you thanks, for the work that still remains we ask your help, and as you have called us from peoples to be one nation, grant that, under your providence, our country may share your blessings with all the peoples of the earth."

-*The Roman Missal, prayer for July 4th*