I'm convinced that students, as an essential part of civic education, need to understand that learning is for living, that education means developing the capacity to make judgments, form convictions, and act boldly on values held. In response to this challenge, we proposed in High School a new Carnegie unit, one based on service. The idea is that every student should be asked to volunteer his or her time at retirement villages, daycare centers, or youth camps, or to tutor other kids at school.

But there's a caution here. While such projects can generate within students a sense of worth, they must be viewed as part of the educational experience and not just an after-school activity. Specifically, service projects should include a written evaluation by the student, linking community activity to classroom theory.

I'm suggesting that civic education, by its very nature, means helping students confront social and ethical concerns and apply what they have learned. We must help them understand that not all choices—in thought and action—are equally valid. Such an education does not dictate solutions or suggest that there are simple answers for every complicated question. Rather, it means helping students develop responsible ways of thinking, believing, and acting.

**Today's Window of Opportunity**

We stand at a strategic time in the history of public education. Interest in schools has run high during the past six years. But public attention cannot be indefinitely sustained. Today's window of opportunity hinges to a great extent on the ability of the schools to pursue, not just the economic, but the civic ends of education.

When all is said and done, the nation's schools should encourage each student to develop the capacity to judge wisely in matters of life and conduct. Time must be taken in classrooms to explore ambiguities and reflect on the consequential social issues of our time. The goal is not to indoctrinate students but to provide a climate in which civic choices can be thoughtfully examined and convictions formed. These are the characteristics by which, ultimately, the quality of public education must be measured. 

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6Ibid., p 85
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