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THE PRACTICE OF POLITICS HAS CHANGED: REDESIGNING CIVIC EDUCATION FOR THE DIGITAL AGE.

We see many signs that the practice of civic and political life has changed in the digital age. Often drawing on the affordances of new digital media, activities we refer to as participatory politics are enabling youth to amplify their voice and sometimes their influence in the civic and political realm. These practices are peer-based and rooted in social rather than institutional networks. They are interactive and are not guided by deference to elites or formal institutions. As a result, participatory politics may provide particularly valuable opportunities for youth who are often kept to the margins of institutional politics. At the same time, these changes create new challenges for those concerned with the quality and equality of civic and political participation.

If we are to prepare youth for this new environment, civic education has a significant role to play. Often though, calls for civic education mirror those from past decades. While many traditional visions of best practice are worthy of continued attention, the expanded opportunities (and challenges) associated with democratic life in the digital age requires major changes in civic education. The talk outlines those needs, proposing new forms of civic and political engagement as well as new kinds of civic education that are worthy of attention from scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. These proposals are based on analysis of a nationally representative survey of youth political engagement and on qualitative case studies conducted by scholars in the US who are part of the MacArthur Foundation Youth and Participatory Politics Research Network.