



Where Excellence Is Tradition

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Leveraging the Recent Election for Growth and Development

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Despite the polarizing and contentious nature of the recent election, our local public schools' faculty and staff members have been diligent and proactive in ensuring our students are learning and growing. These "teachable moments" are not just about acquiring knowledge and insight about the political process, but also about growing in their understanding, perspective and respect of others who may differ on their positions and ideas.

This fall's national and state elections also provide an authentic context to reinforce our country's core democratic values, such as common good, equality, justice and political freedom. The following are key ways that teachers are ensuring their students are learning and growing:

- 1. Building Relationships Through Dialogue and Conversation** – Students are encouraged to listen to each other's stories and uncover the things they have in common. Also, through discussion, teachers model ways of talking with people who disagree – ways of speaking honestly about their opinions without being insulting.
- 2. Strengthening Appropriate Responses to Bullying, Racism and Acts of Hate** – Students are learning to identify and respond to insults and disparaging remarks that are intended to offend groups of people or specific individuals. Students learn and are taught to adhere to strong policies and guidelines that are in place that detail both the unacceptable behavior and consequences assigned. Students are encouraged to meet with school counseling services to talk through issues and receive support if they feel threatened.
- 3. Understanding Media Literacy** – From many sources and media, our students are inundated with news and opinions, some of which is false. Our students are learning to filter news from radio, TV and social media sources from a critical investigative approach. Students are learning that listening, questioning, identifying relevant facts and gathering additional information are all part of the process of being an informed citizen.
- 4. Understanding the Roles of Local, State and Federal Government** – Students are learning the various roles that each level of government plays. They are learning that being aware and engaged locally is just as critical as understanding the broad national narratives, as many issues that immediately impact their lives are influenced more by state and local legislation and resources than federal policies.

This is a historical time in our nation, and through a variety of lessons and discussions, faculty and staff members are helping students navigate through an array of news headlines and the variety of opinions and positions. The lessons that students are learning about democracy, the political process and interpersonal skills will positively shape their adult lives.