



ARDSLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Matthew J. Block
Superintendent of Schools

September 6, 2024

Dear Ardsley Community:

Public education was established to ensure that there are informed citizens in a democratic society. Thomas Jefferson said, "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people." With the 2024 presidential election season upon us, the Ardsley School District remains committed to our mission to, "cultivate learners and informed global citizens who actively influence their world." In adherence to that mission, our team of educators intends to integrate lessons about the presidential election over the next two months in non-partisan, developmentally appropriate ways.

Recognizing that members of our community represent a wide political spectrum, this will be challenging work for Ardsley's educators. Nonetheless, our teachers will be working to connect our students with current events, including those related to the election. We are providing information below regarding foundational principles we have adopted around instruction related to the election, as well as some understandings that we believe will create the best possibility of success in this important endeavor.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- Teaching will be done in developmentally appropriate ways. Elementary school students, for example, will likely not have issues-centered debates, but will learn about why we have a government, what the president does, what civics is, how an election works, and why being a citizen in a democracy is so important. Each school will engage students in a manner best suited for the age group served.
- Instruction about current events will complement, not replace, the regular curriculum. We do not intend for current events to supersede the coverage of regular curriculum standards, but to enhance it and connect to it.
- Our purpose will not be to shape students' views, but to engage students in conversations, reflection, and analysis so that they can better understand the issues at hand, and develop their own understanding. Our work is not to teach students **what** to think, but **how** to think and process information.
- Teachers will avoid sharing (explicitly or implicitly) their own personal views on candidates, parties, or issues. Teachers may debate both sides of an issue to get students thinking, encourage deep reflection, and keep them engaged.
- Lessons may be provided about the election process, the Electoral College, and other election-connected institutions. Not all lessons will be on issues.

- To the extent possible, we will primarily focus on issues and platforms of political parties, as opposed to discussing the various candidates' personalities, sound bytes, and social media posts. Students will be examining multiple resources on a variety of election-related topics.
- Sources will be selected with balance in mind. Understanding that no resource is perfect or completely without bias, we will work to provide students with a variety of informational sources. We will do everything possible to encourage students to read and think critically and recognize bias in materials when appropriate.
- We will work to spark students' interest in current events, politics, government, the news, and the world around them.
- We will encourage students to discuss what they learn at home and engage in family conversations.

OUR REQUESTS:

- Teaching current events in a time of deep political divisions is not an easy task. We ask that you assume the best when you hear about the efforts our teachers are making in the classroom to instruct students on current events, including the election. Please contact the teacher or administrators with any questions or to seek clarification before drawing conclusions about issues that may arise..
- Please reach out directly to us with feedback. Posting on social media will not help us to move forward in a positive or productive manner.

We are confident that our talented educators can effectively teach challenging but important material with our students as long as we work together in partnership to support these foundational learning experiences. We look forward to cultivating critical thinking and inspiring thoughtful debate as we continue to develop future global citizens in Ardsley.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Block, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools