



Moses Brown School

October 8, 2020

Dear Moses Brown Community,

Having passed the one-month mark of the new school year, our attention is now shifting from the logistics of reopening to other important matters, one of which is the upcoming presidential election on November 3. **This letter includes important information about how MB will be approaching the election with students over the course of the next month and beyond.**

As a school, we feel a strong responsibility to help students develop an understanding of representative democracy. While that may sound like a simple goal, achieving it is complicated, especially in the divisive political climate of the United States. As in all previous elections, MB's approach to political education in 2020 is guided by our identity as a Friends school: we are non-partisan, but not neutral.

As a Quaker school, we seek to nurture the Inner Light of each person and uphold values such as integrity, equality and community. We foster and embrace multiple perspectives in our classrooms and help students understand the difference between fact and opinion. We recognize that truth and understanding rarely come from sound bites, but instead result from hard work and deep analysis. We insist that classroom discourse be evidence-based and respectful and never demeaning or deliberately misleading. And, committed to social justice, we strive to cultivate a community and a curriculum that are anti-racist.

In preparation for this year's election---drawing on the excellent work that Assistant Head of Upper School Beth Lantz has done for her Civics in Action course---the school has created a document called Guidelines for Civic Engagement and Political Discourse at Moses Brown, which describes how the school's Quaker values are applied in a classroom setting. It enumerates the characteristics of Ethical Leadership that we seek to foster in our students and establishes guidelines for political expression and activism on campus. **In an effort to promote meaningful and respectful learning about the election, we ask that all members of the MB community read and follow these guidelines.**

In the coming weeks, teachers in all three divisions will be organizing age-appropriate lessons and experiences that foster critical thinking, cultural literacy, and ethical leadership through the lens of the election. Some possible topics include:

- the structure and responsibilities of local, state and national governments and officials;
- the evolution of political parties;
- the electoral process in the United States;
- voting rights;
- the role of the media;
- campaign finance;
- how to determine one's stance on issues.

While we will not hold mock elections this year (as we have at times in the past), we will provide students opportunities for meaningful conversations that go beyond merely choosing a candidate. Teachers will encourage students to consider a range of perspectives and develop their own convictions and positions. They will ask students to consider what constitutes a just society and what role they can play in constructing one. And when the election is concluded, no matter the outcome, teachers will provide space in classrooms and advisories for students to reflect on what comes next for our government and our country.

While presidential elections occur every four years in the United States, the current political, social and economic climate makes the 2020 election unique. As a school, Moses Brown is committed to providing serious education about the election and some of its central issues, including the pandemic, economic inequality, racism, and America's role in the broader world. In doing so, we will hold firm to our Quaker values. This means that propagating speech or ideas that dehumanize, degrade or demean the race or color, religion, sex, ability or disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or national origin of others will not be tolerated. Moses Brown is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community, regardless of identity, feel valued, respected and supported, and that everyone has an opportunity to learn and thrive

As this work begins to unfold in earnest this month, division heads will communicate more specific details with families. In the meantime, please be in touch with me if you have questions or concerns about the school's approach to the coming election.

Sincerely,



Matt Glendinning
Head of School