

Election 2020: Building school community through conversation



WHE THE PEOPLE!

ELECTION 2020



WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

EST.  1893

WALNUT HILL

SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS



A Concert
Series for
Change



Wednesday,
Nov. 9, 2016

Timeline

Early 2017- Summer 2019 == Strengthen our “community” (Community Programs, DEI work)

Fall 2019 == Head of School initial charge

April 2020 == Workshop - *Election 2020: Creating Environments for Civil Discourse and Dialogues Across Differences*

Mid-May 2020 == Green light from our Head of School, Major scaffolding work began

June-Aug 2020 == Faculty/Staff AND student-only Community Conversations, Role-playing for Faculty and staff, Brainstorming Events, Preparing Community

Aug 2020 == Commitment from Head of School during Convocation, launched “WHE The People!” student group, program website went live, introduced commitment to families



WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Goals of Initiative

- ★ Vow to not be in the same place we were after Election Day 2016
- ★ Create a space for students to connect with their peers
- ★ Train faculty to engage in “the work”
- ★ Implement a program to engage in dialogues across differences around the intersection of issues and the upcoming election
- ★ Create community in a virtual world around a shared interest
- ★ Develop skills for our students to become leaders around these topics
- ★ Build confidence in our faculty to engage in dialogues

Advisor & Student Roles

ADVISORS:

- Remain non-partisan
- Create space
- Foster Growth
- Find balance between challenge and support
- Encourage dialogues
- Support students and their initiatives

STUDENTS:

- Ownership of spaces
- Lead/facilitate events
- Communicate with the greater community
- Uphold group norms

WHE THE PEOPLE!

ELECTION 2020

EST.  1893

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

Student Group

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

- Coretta Scott King

Group Atmosphere

- + Encourage student leadership
- + Open space for all
- + Risk taking
- + Every voice matters
- + Students from all majors, grades, and countries
- + Varied political backgrounds
- + Club for all students who are interested in politics and civic activism

Weekly Meetings

- + 7:30pm ET
- + Hot Topics/Current Events
- + Changes in the Election
- + Two Breakout Rooms
 - + Mock Election
 - + Hot Topics
- + Average group size \approx 35

EST.  1893

WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Group Norms

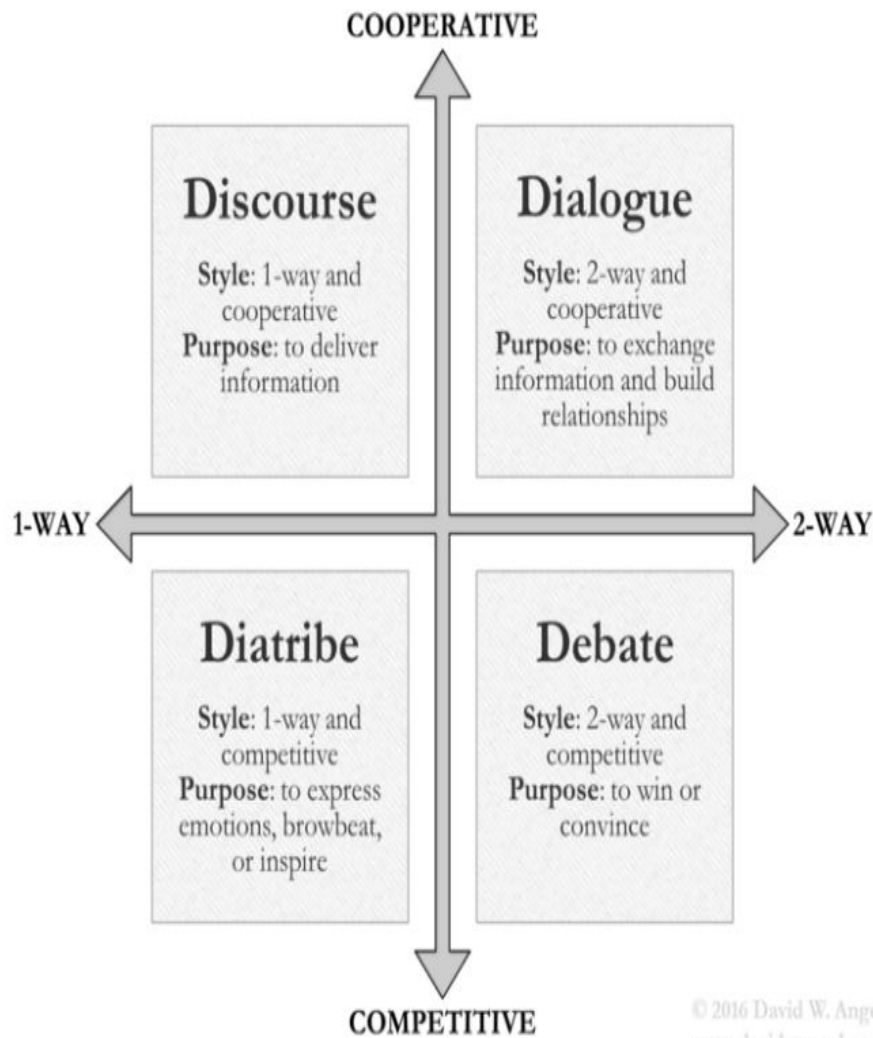
- ★ Challenge the idea, not the person
 - ★ Do your part in creating our brave & safe space
 - ★ Take time to listen to others
 - ★ Don't be afraid of disagreements (ok, to agree to disagree)
 - ★ Be more curious than certain (every question is a good question)
 - ★ Think before you speak
 - ★ Assume the best intentions
-
- ★ Sharing Air Time
 - ★ No interrupting
 - ★ Make people feel included
 - Listen to understand rather than listening to respond
 - ★ Expect non-closure



Discourse & Dialogue Training

Debate and Dialogue

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
• Assuming that there is a right answer, and you have it	• Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they craft a new solution
• Combative: participants attempt to prove the other side wrong	• Collaborative: participants work together toward common understanding
• About winning	• About exploring common ground
• Listening to find flaws and make counter arguments	• Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement
• Defending our own assumptions as truth	• Revealing our assumptions for re-evaluation
• Seeing two sides of an issue	• Seeing all sides of an issue
• Defending one's own views against those of others	• Admitting that others' thinking can improve on one's own
• Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others' positions	• Searching for strengths and value in others' positions
• By creating a winner and loser, discourages further discussion	• Keeps the topic open even after the discussion formally ends
• Seeking a conclusion or vote that ratifies your position	• Discovering new options, not seeking closure



Discourse & Dialogue Training

Discourse & Dialogue Training

Powerful Questions

Clarification

Can you say more? What do you mean?

Elaboration

Can you tell me more? What other ideas do you have about this topic?

Example

What is an example? Like what? Such as? What would it look like?

History

What caused it? What lead up to it?

Options

What are some other possibilities? How else might...?

Prediction

So what do you think will happen if they do? What do you think will happen if they don't?

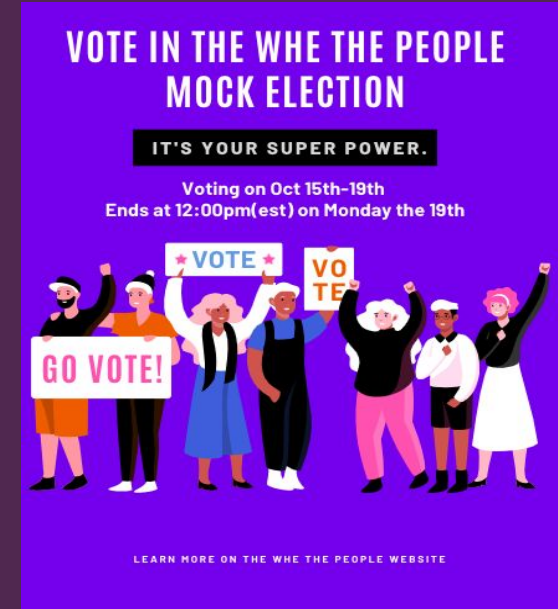
Mock Election

- This was Walnut Hill's first mock election!
- A similar ballot structure to that of an eligible voter in Natick, Massachusetts was created.
- Many considerations were reviewed in an attempt to provide as authentic of an experience as possible for our student community.
- Community-specific question was included (in our case, a "fun" question.)

We are in the final stages of coordinating our plan to announce the results to our community and ensure an awareness of diverse political thought.

Process of sending Mock Election out

- As a group we looked for ways to send emails that would catch people's eyes
- Our end goal was to inform people in a way they wouldn't find it boring
- We took into account the day to day emails they received
- With that in mind we had two ideas a video and posters





PARTICIPATE IN WHE THE PEOPLE

Oct 15th-19th **VOTE** Ends Mon @ 12est

Take part in our mock election! Make an impact on our community.

IT'S EASY!
VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

[HTTPS://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/VIEW/WHE-THE-PEOPLE/INFORMATION/CAMPUS-EVENTS?AUTHUSER=0](https://sites.google.com/view/whe-the-people/information/campus-events?authuser=0)

VOTE IN THE

**WHE
THE PEEPS
MOCK
ELECTION**

[HTTPS://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/VIEW/WHE-THE-PEOPLE/INFORMATION?AUTHUSER=0](https://sites.google.com/view/whe-the-people/information?authuser=0)



Oct 15th-19th
Ending Mon @ 12est
Find more info on
our website

WHE THE PEEPS

BETTERMENT
UNFOLDS TODAY

<https://sites.google.com/view/whe-the-people/information?authuser=0>

VOTE

IN OUR MOCK ELECTION

Find more info
on our website



Voting starts on
Oct 15th-19th
Ends Mon @
12est

VOTE

IN THE WHE THE PEOPLE MOCK ELECTION

TO LEARN ABOUT THE ELECTION PROCESS

Starts OCT 15TH-19TH
Ends MONDAY AT 12EST

To learn more, go to the WHE
the People website



By: Madi

EST.  1893
WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Electoral College



- Realistic as possible
- Electors per "state"
- Importance of your vote

Hot Button Convos

- Group discussions about topics we strongly care about or are on the rise in our society.
- We encourage our students to bring forth topics too!
- Held in a space where everyone is welcomed with an open mindset.
- May be open-ended discussions, or two-sided discourses.
- Good opportunity where we implement our group norms.
- Something we will continue post-election.



★ ★ Debate

★ Watch Parties ★

- Goal-Oriented Events
- Held Virtually through Zoom Meetings
 - Uses the chat feature to make observations + offer online resources to watch debate
 - Discussion time afterward to debrief
- Experiences with Watch Parties





ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

For

- You can't trust the people
- Gives rural states more of a say in elections
- Too hard to get rid of (requires a Constitutional amendment)

Against

- Violates the idea of "one person, one vote"
- Based on racist assumptions from the 18th & 19th Centuries
- See the 2016 and 2000 elections (popular vote \neq electoral vote)



Ian Buttermore



THE GROWTH OF THE ELECTORATE OVER TIME

1789-1920

1789: Only members of the legislature (land-owning, - many slave-owning - white males) vote for the president.

1824: Popular votes are counted for the first time

1870: 15th Amendment gives black males the right to vote, but under Jim Crow laws in the South, these men are denied access to the ballot.

1920-1965

1920: Women are given the right to vote in all federal elections in the 19th Amendment.

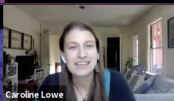
But, under Jim Crow laws in the South, black women are still denied access to the ballot.

1924: Native Americans are given U.S. citizenship but not the right to vote. States will drag their feet on this issue until 1962.

1965-present

1965: The Voting Rights Act passes, prohibiting racial discrimination in elections, theoretically allowing people of all races to vote freely.

1971: The 26th Amendment gives 18-year-olds the right to vote.



Caroline Lowe

Assembly Presentations



OTHER ELECTIONS HAPPENING ON NOVEMBER 3

- Certain races for the U.S. Senate
- All seats of the U.S. House of Representatives
- State and Local elections in many states, cities and towns



jrcrawford-kelly

EST.  1893

WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Let's Talk About Voting

How do I register to vote?

- PRE REGISTER - while every state has different laws surrounding pre registration, in many states you will be allowed to pre register.
 - register by mail
 - register in person
 - register online
 - double check that you are registered online through the state
- REGISTER 10 DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION

How do I vote in 2020? (mass based)

- vote by mail
- vote in person (polls open from 7am to 8pm)
- absentee ballots
- early voting

Election day is Nov. 3

Registration deadlines

Online: Oct. 24

By mail: Postmarked by Oct. 24

In person: Oct. 24

Absentee ballot deadlines

Request: Received by Oct. 28 by 5:00 p.m.

Return by mail: Postmarked by Nov. 3

Return in person: Nov. 3 by close of polls

early voting depends on where you are located and registered to vote, but most of mass will have open voting starting 10 days from now (the 17th of october) and will continue till the 30th of october



International Students & The Community :

- We encourage all of our student members to engage in the following U.S. election.
 - It is important for international students to engage as "the election will determine the roles for foreign nationals in the U.S. economy and whether their contributions are welcomed."
- International students may participate by :
 - Attending campaign rallies and peaceful protests
 - Joining the school politics club like WHE THE PEOPLE!
 - Volunteering for presidential campaigns [check if there is an age requirement]
 - Volunteering for any jobs offered at the political office in the community [such as Natick].

Student-Run Presentation

How Can Art Influence The World?

DANCE: Political Dance Project, Politics and the dancing body

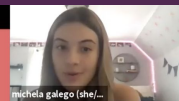
MUSIC: 50 best protest songs of all time, 5 moments when music met politics

THEATER: News flash: Broadway has always been political, Musicals that make political statements

VA: Art and Activism: 1930's-today, Political Art

WFMA: Political Cartoons

And more!! Check it out at: <https://sites.google.com/view/whe-the-people/information>



EST.  1893

WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

International Students & The Community

- Our club encourage all of our student members to engage in the U.S. election.
- International students may participate by :
 - Joining the school politics club (such as WHE The People!)
 - Attending campaign rallies and peaceful protests
 - Volunteering for presidential campaigns.
 - Volunteering for any jobs offered at a political office in the community.



Politics In The Classroom

- To be a student engaged in politics
- To be an educator involving students
 - how to gain student interest
- Student organizations / initiative
- Norms and guidelines to help create a safe and non partisan environment.

Example of student engagement may look like ↓



This is a student made graphic, with customized characters from the popular video game *Among Us*. In WHE The People we use this graphic for the student organized Civil Discourse Corner, which had the first official meeting this past Saturday.

Us and Art

VISUAL ARTS



Huffingtonpost

Art and Activism: 1930's - Today

10 Best Political Art Pieces and Their Creators

WHE the People!

Information

THEATRE



5 Musicals That Make Strong Political Statements

The Odyssey Online



News Flash: Broadway has always been political.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/broadway-has-always-been-political_n_58332cf6e4b030997bc088f8

WHE the People!

Information

DANCE



Martha Graham Dance Co.

Martha Graham Dance Company's
'Political Dance Project'



Marc Engelen, photographer, Judith Jamison (center) and members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in Ailey's Revelations, 1974. Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation Collection. Music Division, Library of Congress (009.00.00)

Politics and the Dancing Body

The Library of Congress

WHE the People!

Information

WRITING, FILM, MEDIA ARTS



POLITICAL CARTOONS/COMICS

Go Comics - Web Comics

Political Comics

Read political comics and cartoons online at GoComics.com, the world's largest comic strip site for online classic strips like Calvin and Hobbes, Dilbert, Non Sequitur, Get Fuzzy, Luann, Pearl Before Swine, 9 Chickweed Lane and more!



Go Comics - Political Cartoons

Political Cartoons

WHE the People!

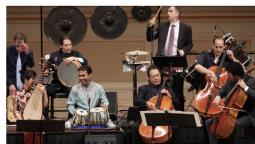
Information

MUSIC



50 Best Protest Songs of All Time

Paste Magazine



5 Moments when classical music met politics

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/arts/music/5-moments-when-classical-music-met-politics.html>

EST.  1893

WALNUT HILL
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Working with Faculty & Staff

- DEI Community Conversations began Summer 2020
 - #BlackLivesMatter
 - Black@
 - Health and wellbeing of adult community
 - COVID and our Community
 - Politically-themed scenarios for our community
- Faculty Brainstorming Sessions
 - 3x during Summer 2020
- Resources on our "WHE The People!" website
- Cross-Collaborations
- Remain non-partisan while still engaging in conversations!
- Commitment from top-down!

What else are WHE planning for OUR communities

Ongoing Events and Activities

- Continuing Civil Discourse Corner
- Training faculty and staff to engage conversations
- Guidebook for families



On Election Day

- Encouraging members of our community to vote if they haven't already
- Hyflex watch parties between students on and off-campus.
 - Looking to continue that community feeling

What else are WHE planning for OUR communities (cont.)

Day(s) after the election:

- Morning meditation session for faculty to prepare for the day
- Holding an all-school assembly
 - Recognizing outcome
 - Acknowledging our diverse political ideologies
 - Promoting ways to get/stay involved
 - Utilizing our resources to share out about “what comes next”
- Affinity spaces for our students, faculty and staff
 - Existing affinity spaces
 - Politically specific spaces

Two Weeks From Election Day!



- ❑ Create norms in your classroom, school or student organization/club
- ❑ Create affinity spaces for members of your community to gather and discuss relevant topics impacting one another
- ❑ Offer resources to faculty/staff/advisors around navigating topics in their respective settings.
- ❑ Engage in conversations with your students!
 - ❑ Many of us joining in today ARE educators!
- ❑ Acknowledge the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of your community leading up to and after the election.
- ❑ Implement role playing for your adult community.
 - ❑ Time to “look raggedy”

Thank you!



Zach Roberson
Director of Community Programs

zroberson@walnuthillarts.org



Workshops Attended

Election 2020: Creating Environments for Civil Discourse and Dialogues Across Differences

April 30, 2020 - Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE)*

Empowering Political Discourse Dialogues in Your School

July 21, 2020 - Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE)*

Navigating Challenging Conversations

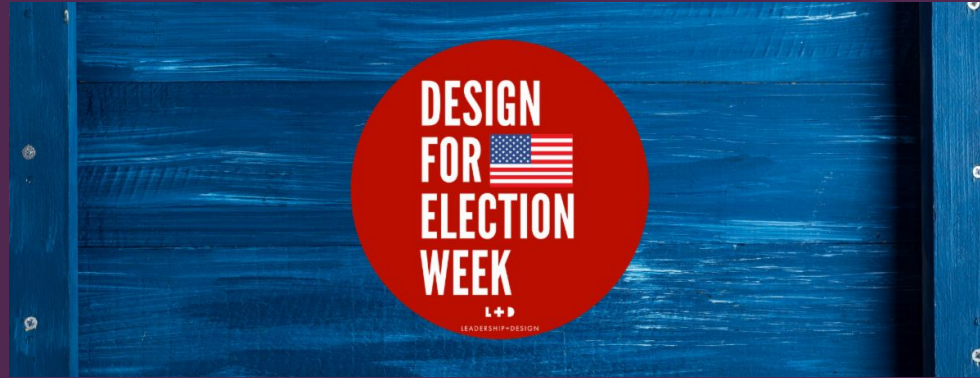
August 18, 2020 - National Network of Schools in Partnership

Election 2020 Teach Meets

October 27, 2020 - Institute for Social and Emotional Learning

* denotes membership

Additional Resource



Leadership+Design has created an Election Week experience that will leave educators feeling confident and prepared to facilitate critical civil discourse with students.

Design for Election Week offers experiences for students that build empathy, stoke civic engagement, and celebrate our democratic republic.

<https://www.leadershipanddesign.org/design-for-election-week>