



*August 15, 2024*

This is an update regarding Wheeler's approach to communicating about world events.

As an institution of learning, one of our primary jobs is to ensure that students have frequent opportunities to process their world, learn from history, and come to their own conclusions alongside and with one another.

Wheeler is fortunate to have a powerful origin story, courtesy of artist and educator Mary C. Wheeler, whose call to learn our powers and be answerable for their use inspires our promise statement.

## **The Promise of a Wheeler Education:** *To Learn Our Powers and Be Answerable for Their Use*

- **Curiosity and choice drive engagement and excellence.**
- **Relationships matter. Every person should be known, seen, and heard.**
- **Empathy requires practice and reflection.**
- **Experience—in class and in the world—leads to insight and wisdom.**
- **Enduring learning requires meaningful work, critical thinking, and productive struggle.**
- **Joy, creativity, and courage must be cultivated and celebrated.**
- **Every classroom is a studio.**

This set of beliefs characterizes our work, as we aspire to see the full humanity and dignity of each person and express care and concern for one another while recognizing that any community—including a community of learning—is complex and sometimes messy.

This important process has been happening, especially in recent years, against a backdrop of uncertainty and polarization. In response, institutions and organizations of all kinds have been

compelled to deliver statements about world events and social issues. Wheeler, like many schools, has been part of that trend, as we've shared messages with our community about external events, typically to offer sympathy or provide recommended resources for those wanting to discuss the situation at home. While these reasons are certainly good ones, and we have often received positive feedback for these communications, we have come to see that such messages can *become* the conversation, distracting us from true engagement and deliberation.

With this in mind, like many other schools and universities, we have decided that, **going forward, we will only send all-school messages outside of our normal communications cycle (i.e., our "This Week at Wheeler" e-newsletter) when there is important information for our parent, guardian, and/or alumni community to know about school operations or the student experience.** Depending on various circumstances, such instances may include physical safety concerns, logistical changes, or other notable announcements like a leadership transition. To be clear, that also means that **we will not send communications concerning world events unless they have an immediate relevance as stated above.**

As always, when significant events do occur, and where it is deemed developmentally appropriate, you can be sure that students will have the opportunity to discuss them with teachers and staff in classrooms or community gatherings, seek out spaces to be with peers who are having similar experiences, or speak with trusted adults if they need support at school. We will also offer a list of resources compiled by our Health Center team, accessible via the Parent and Guardian Portal, that can help you have conversations with your child at home.

If you ever have questions about whether or how we plan to provide time and space for discussion at school, please don't hesitate to reach out to division heads, who will be in close contact with your children's teachers and staff. And, if you have any questions about our approach to community-wide messages, we invite you to reach out to us about that as well.