

News Release:

Canton Public Schools

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Update on the work of the Canton BOE Mascot Review Committee, Public Input Sought

CANTON- The Canton Board of Education's Mascot Review Committee has been hard at work and is seeking public input as they prepare to make their recommendations regarding the fate of the Canton High School Warrior mascot to the Board of Education in September.

"During the 2020-2021 school year, the Canton Public Schools developed an Equity Statement and Equity Policy, which were both approved by the Board of Education on June 22, 2021. With that important work completed, we could then begin the review of the Warrior mascot," said Board of Education Chairwoman, Julie Auseré.

The committee, chaired by Erika Hayes has been meeting bi-weekly since mid-May and has spent considerable time learning about the history and evolution of the Warrior mascot and about the Tunxis tribe, who lived on the land that is now Canton.

They also had Dr. Glen Mitoma, Director, Dodd Human Rights Impact and Assistant Professor of Human Rights and Education at the University of Connecticut Human Rights Institute speak at one of their meetings to share his experience. He offered the committee guiding principles and processes on how to move the charge of the committee forward. Dr. Mitoma has assisted other Connecticut towns with Native American mascots through their decision-making process.

Committee members have read through all the district materials regarding our mission, our Vision of a Graduate, and the equity statement to see how our current mascot fits in with these beliefs and our curriculum goals.

The questions that remain are:

Should the feathers and Native American images and depictions be removed completely from the logo and mascot? Can we remove the feathers and all native American imagery and stay the

Warriors? What would the new logo be? Do we need to find another mascot entirely? Or perhaps we don't need a traditional mascot at all?

Some members of the committee would like to stay Warriors since the word itself is not of Native American origin and is not by definition attributed to any one ethnic or racial group. They also argue that many other groups (e.g., American Ninja Warrior, Golden State Warriors, Wounded Warriors etc..) successfully use the word without any connection to Native American culture.

"I believe that we can remove all the Native American imagery and stay the Canton Warriors if we take this opportunity to define exactly who the Canton Warrior is. If we have a clear vision that fits in with our goals and values as a district and a community who is to tell us we are wrong?" said Canton Athletic Booster Club President, Amy Orschel.

She continued, "The Canton Public Schools and the Canton community are committed to an environment of equality and inclusion. How then can we decide that any one symbol, person, or animal adequately and fairly represents the physical representation of our Warrior? Our Canton Warrior has very specific attributes but many, many faces. Perhaps what we need is motto and not a mascot. We are Warriors. It's a way of living in our town, the type of graduates we'd like to produce, and the values we'd like to instill in them."

Other committee members have expressed a desire to add learning about the Tunxis tribe, who once lived on the lands that are now Canton, to our social studies curriculum.

The Canton Board of Education established the Canton High School Mascot Temporary Committee on August 11, 2020, to facilitate a community engagement process to review the current Canton High School Mascot.

The committee is charged with the task of considering the implications on the education of Canton Public School students and how the current mascot aligns with the Canton Public Schools Equity Statement and Canton High School's Vision of a Graduate. The committee will also consider the mascot with regards to culturally responsive education, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The committee will make recommendations to the Board of Education in September 2021.

The next meeting of the Mascot Review Committee will be on Wednesday, August 11th at 7 p.m. via ZOOM. If you would like to attend, please use the link that will be posted on CantonSchools.org website on the day of the meeting. Or if you would like to email your comments, please send them to boepubliccomment@cantonschools.org.

Committee Chairwoman, Erika Hayes added, "Hearing from the public is an important part of our mascot review process. It is a chance for every person who wants to share their opinion to do so. Whether they submit written comment or speak during the zoom meeting, we would appreciate hearing from as many community members as possible, and most importantly Canton students."

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