

November 17, 2020

As members of the Parent and Caregiver Anti-Racism and Equity Team, we are committed to working to create an anti-racist future for HS1327. We recently rewrote our purpose statement as follows to reflect a commitment to engaged action towards this mission:

The purpose of the Anti-Racism and Equity team is to confront, actively address and eliminate institutional, systemic and structural racism at HS 1327. We will hold HS 1327 accountable to its mission to provide a more equitable, safe, diverse, inclusive and culturally responsive educational and learning environment for all students, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic status so that all students will have the opportunity to realize their full academic and social potential in high school.

In alignment with this purpose, we stand in support of students and staff at HS 1327 who want to remove the name Sir Francis Drake. Our school's Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students, staff and their allies' concerns are crucial to the decision to advocate for changing our school name. In the words of the teachers asking for this change:

...we lost our focus on the students themselves, who are at the center of teaching and education. Individually, collectively and institutionally we have neglected to consistently and emphatically address policies, systems, and behaviors that have led our students and colleagues to feel unsafe, unwelcome, and undervalued.

Students have also voiced their concerns demonstrating they are well on their way to being culturally competent global citizens who speak up for equity and inclusion. They have passionately and courageously vocalized that the name and symbol of Sir Francis Drake feel deeply harmful and exclusionary.

We recognize that many people in our predominantly white community don't understand the lived experience driving people to advocate for this name change. Regardless of their understanding, if a large portion of our students, staff and administration say it is harmful, we choose to listen to them. We choose to heed their call for a change. We choose to accept the fact it is time to move beyond local nostalgia, beyond historical debate, and towards a future that prioritizes students and prepares them for global citizenship.

The significance of dismantling monuments and symbols that sustain racism is profound, both literally and figuratively. The name Sir Francis Drake is a symbol that many members of our community do not want to celebrate or continue using to represent this learning community. Changing the name of HS 1327 is a symbolic change and one necessary step in our ongoing anti-racist work. This means creating a school where every student and staff member feels included and anti-racism is reflected in the curriculum, behaviours, actions, environment, and yes, the very name and symbol of the school.

This debate is located in a much larger state and national debate. In a press release on June 1, 2020 State Superintendent Tony Thurmond speaks directly to the family of George Floyd, *“to the loved ones of George Floyd, I believe that you deserve more than condolences and prayers. I believe that you deserve action that leads to racial justice.”* He calls on all of us to act when he says, *“we know that bias exists in every sector of society. Now is our time to speak, and to address racism and implicit bias in education.”* [California Department of Education \(CDE\) Facebook page.](#) In his remarks, the State Superintendent noted that public education can play an important role in better exploring the connection between issues of educational equity and implicit bias in the classroom and the systemic racism that persists throughout society.

The amount of debate/resistance around changing this symbol shows a lack of empathy and is an indication the experiences and pain of BIPOC students, staff, and community members are not being understood or prioritized. If we are to create an inclusive school community, one that prepares all our students to live 21st century lives in a diverse global world, there is no defensible reason to deny and prolong this name change decision. Let the students and staff know that the board and community stand with them, understand them, and will take action now to create an anti-racist school. The name change is a vital step that, once completed, allows us to devote our attention and energy to making systemic changes. This will be a much bigger and ongoing job and is one that we proudly take on.

Respectfully and In Solidarity,

The Anti-Racism and Equity Parent Team

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Please [click this link](#) to add your name to our letter. This letter will go to the DLC this Thursday and to the Tam Board subsequently. We will read the letter during public comment as well.