

JUNE 22 PUBLIC COMMENTS

Inclusion / Support of Black Staff and Students

- **Katie Badger**, harake Washington Education Association, Executive Committee / *{copy of letter also attached}*
- **Dana Hsim**, LWSD Teacher and Parent, danakhsi@gmail.com
- **Katie White**, Redmond High School Teacher, katemkw@gmail.com
- **Leann Clawson**, Library Media Specialist, lclawson@lwsd.org
- **Gregory Thacher**, 8th Grade LA/SS Teacher, gthacher@lwsd.org
- **Joy Randall**, Parent of 6th grader, Northstar & 8th grader/RHMS, joyous1118@gmail.com
- **Renay Ferguson-George**, LWSD Equity Advisory Team Member, Power to the People, Black Lives Matter, Advocate for Angel and Achillis George , ronaygeorge@gmail.com
- **Kim Haber**, Rose Hill Middle School, khaber@lwsd.org
- **Kristin Dougherty & Julie Bergvin**, Kamiakin Middle School,
- **Kim Haber**, Rose Hill Middle School, khaber@lwsd.org
- **Rachelle Horner**, rhorer@lwsd.org
- **Maryziel Galarpe** bsgalarpe@gmail.com
- **Crystal Visperas**, Eastlake HS Teacher, cvisperas@lwsd.org
- **Emma Haskin**, enel1016@live.com
- **Melanie Miller**, melaniemiller40@gmail.com
- **Molly Wilson** mcwilson5397@gmail.com
- **Tara Pozo**, Quest Teacher, tarapozo@gmail.com
- **Elizabeth Prowell**, eprowell@sbcglobal.net
- **Cleo Rohn**, 9th grade EHS teacher, crohn@lwsd.org
- **Colin Tracy**, EHS Teacher, ctracy@lwsd.org
- **Kyla Thompson**, Finn Hill Middle School, K kthompson@lwsd.org
- **John Norris**, Eastlake Teacher, jnorris@lwsd.org
- **Kate Wold**, EHS Teacher, kawold@lwsd.org
- **Matt Austin**, Eastlake Teacher, maustin@lwsd.org
- **Shila Hodgins**, Eastlake Teacher, PRIDE Co-Advisor, shodgins@lwsd.org
- **Mary Ellen Olafson**, Kirkland Middle School Teacher, meolafson@gmail.com
- **Katie Badger**, Redmond High School Teacher, katie.badger@washingtonea.org
- **Sheri Kabore** sheribillmayer@gmail.com
- **Karen Murk**, John Muir Teacher, kmurk@lwsd.org
- **Christina deVidal**, Eastlake High School Teacher, cdevidal@lwsd.org
- **Greta Climer**, gretacl@hotmail.com

Juanita High School Mascot

- **Libby Finerty**, former LWSd student and community member, libbyfinerty@icloud.com
- **Elizabeth Standal**, standalem@hotmail.com
- **Theresa Harrington**, JHS Class of 1988 & Parent of a JHS Class of 2018, 2020 and 2022; JHS PTSA Secretary, tk.harrington@frontier.com
- **Grace Harrington**, staygraceful@outlook.com
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- **Jacqueline Davis**, Class of '84, jacquelinejeannenw@gmail.com
- **Jessica Marques**, Krista "Kipp" Diaz, JHS Class of 1998, Janet Kipp, Parent-2 alumni & community member, JHS PTSA Co-President, 1996-98, Jessica "Kipp" Marques, JHS Class of 1994, jesskippmarques@gmail.com
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- **Abby Main**, former JHS student (phone message)
- **Kara Stafford**, zebramamayoga@hotmail.com
- **Karen Girard**, karenemain@comcast.net
- **Megan Wong**, graduating Senior JHS, submittal of collective letter from JHS Students, megankw1800@gmail.com / {copy of collective letter also attached}
- **Melissa Stone**, melissa_nouveau@yahoo.com
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Transcripts

- **Diana Laforanara**, diana@dianala.com / (two documents referenced attached)

Inclusion – Support of Black Staff and Students

- **Katie Badger**, Lake Washington Education Association, Executive Committee *{copy of letter also attached – text below}*

As members of the Executive Board, we speak on behalf of the Lake Washington Education Association membership. A change, long overdue, is occurring in our country. The district is obligated, as a public institution, to lead our community towards equity and justice, now and in the future.

Crucially in this effort, the Board of Directors and district leadership must dedicate resources to combatting institutional racism through concrete, defined, and immediate actions to address racial discrimination and racial bias that exists in our schools.

Black students and their families, Black community members, and Black employees of LWSD deserve to know that their lives, their safety, their wellbeing, their work, their futures, and their successes are valued by the district, and that the district is committed to this work in defined, measurable, and actionable ways – through budgeting, policies and practices, training, hiring, curriculum, and communication. The district's budget reflects its priorities, and the budget should change as priorities change. LWSD must make their own commitment to racial equity and justice obvious so that it becomes cultural.

LWEA demands that the Board of Directors and district leadership take the following steps immediately to address systemic racial inequity, racial discrimination, and racism that exists in our schools:

- Implement Black Lives Matter At School Week at all LWSD schools.
- Adopt a budget that clearly prioritizes equity work in our district, including paid racial equity work.
- Make the district's equity page on the LWSD website more visible and ensure that it includes our strategic plan for equity work (particularly racial equity work) and resources for educators, district employees, students and parents to help them grow in the understanding of racial injustice (and other systems of oppression, such as class, sexuality, ability, religion, gender identity).
- Conduct a full racial equity audit, bi-annually, of the district office and all school buildings to bring to light ways white supremacy culture is being perpetuated by any of our institutional practices. The results of each racial equity audit must be published on the district equity page and used to create a racial equity improvement plan.
- Create a plan to implement mandatory, ongoing training on racial equity and bias to be completed every year by all staff. The training plan, which must be published by September 2020 on the equity page, must be developed in partnership with school equity teams to include a robust and fully funded budget and a timeline for development and implementation in the next school year. This training must be reviewed annually by the district equity team using equity audit results.
- Adopt a school board racial equity policy and a procedure to redress racial equity conflicts which includes independent investigations of reported incidents of racial bias or harassment and mandatory racial equity training for employees and students found to have engaged in racial discrimination. The district equity team has drafted such a policy already.

- Review current district curriculum in grades P-12 for existing ethnic studies and diversity components; by January 2021 implement ethnic studies as a required curricular component for grades 7-12 and integrate racial equity social justice standards into the curriculum for grades P-12 in all subjects.
- Emphasize and prioritize diversity in hiring, including efforts to recruit, hire, and retain diverse district-level leadership; recruit, hire, and retain diverse educators and other staff through programs like micro-credentialing; include equity training as a prerequisite for hiring; and add racial equity knowledge as a component of hiring through the use of interview questions.
- Implement immediately de-escalation training for school security staff and any staff involved in student supervision.
- Defund the SRO program in schools and reallocate these funds to the social, emotional, and health needs of students.

LWEA stands ready to collaborate with the district in prioritizing racial equity work, dismantling racial prejudice, and calling out white supremacy culture in our schools. This work cannot wait for a better time or more funding. We cannot expect someone else to address these issues. We must act now and sustain our work going forward. This will require both direction from the Board of Directors and a partnership between LWSD and LWEA.

- **Dana Hsim**, LWSD Teacher and Parent, danakhsi@gmail.com
LWSD proudly proclaims its interests in “Academic Success” and “Community Involvement”. It's relatively easy to give a statement like "Black Lives Matter" and move on. It's much harder, but more fruitful and necessary, to put words into actions.
Please support our educators in elevating Black staff and student voices by:
 1. Requiring that Black history and ethnic studies be taught. It is part of our American and world history. My classes never mentioned functioning Black communities, African cultures, or Juneteenth. How many other “Hidden Figures” should we choose to not show our students?
 2. Changing methodology for all staff (teachers, classified workers, and administrators) to more culturally-affirming-based practices. We have strong communities of color, of non-Christian religions, of immigrants. Their voices should be part of our classes.
 3. Training all staff how to hold conversations around race, class, ability, and other societally-minoritized statuses. This skill should not be expected to reside only with teachers of color. These conversations should be happening at all age levels, especially elementary.
 4. Searching out and consciously supporting more staff of color in all of our buildings. Washington is predominantly white, but our area and our students are not. Our staffing should reflect that reality.
 5. Removing police from our buildings. While I, a white woman, have favorable interactions with officers, they are a source of tension and fear with many of our students and staff. No one should feel unsafe at school. Instead, have that money moved toward student health and social work.

It would be incredible if, instead of following the Seattle-metro districts as usual, LWSD were able to help lead the way in creating these kinds of actions and spaces.

- **Katie White**, Redmond High School Teacher, katemkw@gmail.com
I hope you will seek feedback from our communities of color during this process. Rather than assuming you know best, as the people in power, it is your responsibility to reach out to the people who understand these issues from firsthand personal experience. It can be frightening and awkward because you will have to face criticism and reflect on your blind spots. However, that difficult process is truly our only way forward. Therefore, I hope you make it a priority to proactively seek to build relationships with the communities of color in LWSD and open yourselves to vulnerable conversations and reflections on how we can best serve our families.
- **Leann Clawson**, Library Media Specialist, lclawson@lwsd.org
Thank you for looking out for the needs of students and staff in our district. Your task is not an easy one. As part of this continued work, I would like to advocate for the acceptance of the demands presented by the equity letter submitted by the LWEA. We have a very diverse population of students, however, as a system, we are a very color-blind and dismissive of the challenges associated with racial issues. Teachers are passionate about reaching all students, but we cannot do without systemic support.

As a teacher in this district, I would like to expand on the curriculum demands made by the LWEA. I specifically request that our history curriculum (all levels) be updated so that it reflects US history accurately. Unfortunately, many of our staff, including myself, were taught a starkly inaccurate US history that glorified white, male accomplishments while ignoring the uglier side of history, particularly Black/African American history. This pattern can no longer be allowed to continue if we want to break the cycle of systemic racism.

I would also like to add on to the LWEA demands for staff training. This training needs to be MEANINGFUL. There is a danger in yearly trainings becoming a checkbox like many of the other yearly trainings we do. This cannot happen. We need to make sure these trainings are accompanied with discussion so we can truly understand one another's needs. We also need to have modeling and direct examples of how to integrate this training and knowledge into our classrooms. It does not matter how much training is provided if there is no follow-up and support for integration into our daily practice.

Thank you for listening to all of our comments.

- **Gregory Thacher**, 8th Grade LA/SS Teacher, gthacher@lwsd.org
I want to thank you for heightening our educational community's awareness regarding equity issues in our district. I believe we should expand on this so we can genuinely listen to other voices, even ones that may make us uncomfortable. If it doesn't challenge us, it probably won't change us. I appreciate being part of a district that has all people groups heard, then implements changes necessary for our growing and changing district. May we continue to listen well and implement meaningful changes.
Thank you.

- **Joy Randall**, Parent of 6th grader, Northstar & 8th grader/RHMS, joyous1118@gmail.com
I had the opportunity to listen to Equity Director, Gloria Henderson, at a Juneteenth celebration supporting Black, Brown students, their families and staff. She was very inspiring with her healing words for such a painful time for our country right now. I believe expanding resources for her Equity department with more staff and resources is important right now. I'm made aware that she only has 2 other staff members that oversee 52,000 students in our district. It's vital right now that we begin to do the important work of dismantling the inequities and systemic racism that our educational system holds. This begins with adopting a strong Equity policy and providing enough budget and support to fully implement the policy.

Also, I wish to inquire about how the curriculum will be enriched to honor SB 6066 that Gov. Inslee signed into law this year. I believe following a focus that is Anti-Racist is important in order to teach students not only what has been lacking in the teaching of this country's history but also what actions they can learn to fight against racism.

This district covers many areas, many of those areas are quite segregated as mine is. What can our community of parents, students and staff do to address the bubble, the limitations we have from this segregated situation? LWSD can lead the way in making true change.

I've just recently learned of this resource that may be a helpful option for the teachers.
<https://www.teachingforblacklives.org/>

- **Renay Ferguson-George**, LWSD Equity Advisory Team Member, Power to the People, Black Lives Matter, Advocate for Angel and Achillis George, ronaygeorge@gmail.com
8 minutes and 46 seconds. That's how long it took for George Floyd to die under the knee of a police officer. However, his death is a gruesome culmination of institutional and structural racism that is stitched into the very fabric of our nation. This thread stitches together a long history of biases, stereotypes, and racism that extends into our educational system. As a mother of two Black children and as a member of our District Equity Team for three years, I have a sense of urgency that burns within me because I see the work that needs to be done. I see how the current state of our district still doesn't serve our most vulnerable students—those vulnerable to a system that was not built for them. It is a system that was meant to minimize them, to not see them, to penalize them, and to shrink them. My son and daughter have just as much of a right to flourish as the students that Lake Washington seems to do well at supporting. It's time for Lake Washington to get its knee off the necks of Black students. Black students go to school in places where they are called the n-word and where kids pass around n-word cards giving some a cruel permission to say that word, while many staff and administrators do little or nothing about it. That knee is pressed firmly into our kids' necks when the curricula that they are taught highlights slavery, but not resistance, resilience, and brilliance. All of our students lose out when only the white person's story is told to the detriment of most others. This upholds supremacy and sends a clear message on who is welcomed and whose story is valid. That knee is suffocating our children when there is a lack of regular and deep district-wide race and equity training for all staff and administrators. The students in LWSD are being educated and surrounded by people who may have good hearts but also need continuous and regular training so they don't intentionally or unintentionally hurt our kids—hurt my kids. I am demanding change, which includes the following: an equity budget that supports the training and staffing needed for staff

and administrators, a change in curricula, and work to ensure that our students are physically and socially and emotionally safe at school. When we advocated for a black District Equity Director, we expected that person to be part of the cabinet. Here we are going on our third year Gloria Henderson is not part of the cabinet, what does that say about the white privilege in the LWSD? It has been 8 minutes and 46 seconds, and the clock is still ticking.

- **Kim Haber**, Rose Hill Middle School, khaber@lwsd.org
Kristin Dougherty & Julie Bergvin, Kamiakin Middle School,
We are middle school math and science teachers in LWSD. After reading the Board's statement dated June 1, 2020 and listening to its equity related discussions during Saturday's study session, we would like the Board to:
 1. Take the actions demanded by the LWEA in their Equity letter dated June 22, 2020.
 2. Add a Board value statement that speaks directly to dismantling the systems of oppression within LWSD.
 3. Understand that equity work is about fixing systems and not students.
 4. Commit to expand its knowledge on issues of race and educate itself on how white culture and white supremacy play out in the systems at LWSD.
 5. Be willing to make district-wide changes that challenge the status quo to achieve equity for students of color. This should include increased per pupil funding and resource allocation (e.g. counseling staff) to schools based on demographics.
 6. Prioritize its outreach to LWSD communities of color. Make these families the first, second and third groups you meet with at minimum.
 7. Assure that the pace of district equity work is not driven by the interests and comfort of people who have the least interest in its progress.
- **Rachelle Horner**, rhorer@lwsd.org
I encourage you to take immediate action to dismantle institutional racism in the LWSD school district. Graduating from Redmond High School it was my experience there that drew me to teaching. I was one of the few Black students. The constant racism I faced, both blatant and incidental, combined with the lack of any curriculum that represented African Americans as anything other than slaves or MLK led me to hate myself. I hated myself so much I tried to pretend I wasn't black. Though I can't pass as white, I thought if I passed as something other than Black that I would be accepted, that I would hold some value. It wasn't until I attended the University of Washington and became an Ethnic Studies Major with a focus on African American Literature that I learned I had nothing to be ashamed of. I learned Black people have inherent greatness and that our history and culture are so much more than just slavery and MLK. Education should not teach children to be ashamed of themselves, but that is what an education from LWSD taught me. I became a teacher so no other student of color had to go through what I did. What I found when I returned to LWSD as a teacher, however, was an uphill battle. The teachers were still mostly white, the curriculum was still whitewashed, and teachers including myself who pushed for something better were labeled radical and bias. It was allowed because the district upholds and perpetuates institutional racism through its policies and lack of intentional action to undo it. It's time to take the action steps suggested by teachers at Eastlake High School and the LWEA. If the district continues to do nothing, all of the words about caring about Black lives mean nothing.

- **Maryziel Galarpe**, bsgalarpe@gmail.com

My name is Maryziel Galarpe. I am of Philippine descent, a kindergarten teacher at Blackwell Elementary, a proud member of the LWEA, and sit on their Executive Board as the Ethnic Minority Representative. I'm also a member of the District Equity Advisory Committee. I joined that committee three years ago, the same year our district launched equity teams in all buildings. Since then, only office staff have received mandatory equity training. On our first year, the equity team developed a draft of what we believed was a solid equity policy. It was approved to bring it forward to this board. But it didn't! Then year two came and went, and here we are at the end of year three. I am not here speaking on behalf of LWEA or as a teacher with the LWSD. I'm here because I am a parent too. I am a parent of three brown children who have already graduated from LWSD. I am here for my son, Michael, a very smart and creative being, who struggled to fit in. He struggled to connect with his white teachers. He struggled to find motivation to do his best while in school. I am here because this district failed him. I am here because I failed him when I failed to speak up for him. I became complacent. How many more years are you going to let pass us by before we SHOULD fix the system that just IS NOT working for ALL our Black and Brown students. We need an equity policy. We need to change our curriculum so that we are truly preparing for a global society. We need to raise students to be anti-racist. Please take this seriously because if you are NOT part of the solution, then YOU are part of the problem.

- **Crystal Visperas**, Eastlake HS Teacher, cvisperas@lwsd.org

My name is Crystal Visperas and next year will be my 14th year of teaching English. This is also my first year in LWSD and my first year where most of my colleagues and students are white. In these spaces, I often feel unheard and uncomfortable as I am one of two colleagues of color in the Humanities Department. First, I implore the School District to make direct action in actively seeking out and hiring more teachers of color and teachers with varied identities (including LGBTQ community and Indigenous experience). If we are inclusionary and anti-racist in our teaching practices, so must our hiring practices. Secondly, my colleagues at Eastlake and I wrote a letter to the School Board on June 1st directed at Dr. Stavem to correct her community statement to include the word "Black" and proudly proclaim that Black Lives Matter. A second communication was sent to Dr. Stavem to include a written apology for the grave mistake of not including and centering Black people's lived experiences, protection of their lives and the brutal murder of Black people by the hands of police. We have not heard follow-up from her or the School Board on how this was taken into serious consideration. This silence pains us and our students of color whom we serve. And third, I demand that the School Board continually message (through weekly letters and resources) to the LWSD community that we stand for Black Lives and will not remain complicit and in our actions as we continue to dismantle the oppressive systems (such as SRO and officers in our school) which pervade every part of our schools. This is what your teachers of color want. This is what your Black community needs. This is the responsibility and duty of Lake Washington School District.

- **Emma Haskin**, enel1016@live.com

My name is Emma Haskin, and I have taught for 4 years in the Lake Washington School District. I started here as a 1st year teacher four years ago, and I am saddened to say that nothing has changed in terms of racial equality and equitable teaching practices. The school I teach has a predominantly white student body, and that is unfortunately reflected in the staff as well. As a district, you need to hire more educators of color. If we say that we are anti-racist in our policies and systems, our hiring practices must be as well. Since I began, the staff at my school has had Equity training, Culturally Responsive Teaching training, we've discussed the inequities at our school, we've changed our school values, but still, nothing changes. One training, one word altered is not enough. This work must be continuous. I demand that the School Board continually message (weekly) to the LWSD community that we stand for Black Lives and will not remain complicit in our actions as we continue to dismantle the oppressive system which pervade every part of our schools. Teachers are doing this work in schools, but they need to be held accountable by administrators who need to be held accountable by district leaders. This is the responsibility and duty of the Lake Washington School District.

- **Melanie Miller**, melaniemiller40@gmail.com

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my concerns regarding race and equity in our district. Following is information I hope you will consider in order to make our district more racially aware and equitable. I am writing as a district Elementary School Counselor, parent, and community member.

Trauma-based trainings for all staff: A topic at many LWEA meetings is the growing amount of disruptive, challenging behaviors with students. Our current systems for behavior management and discipline are counterproductive to the well-being of all students and especially for students of color. Trauma informed practices benefit all students and give teachers the tools for creating supportive, structured, and welcoming classrooms.

Restorative Practices instead of Rewards and Consequences: Having worked in education for over 18 years, I see administrators continuing to use an outdated and inequitable approach to discipline based on rewards and consequences. We are pushing students away from positive peer connections and their right to an education.

Associate Principals at Elementary Level: Elementary children need training in self-regulation and problem solving with peers. An antiquated system of rewards and punishment coupled with a top down approach to discipline perpetuates the school to prison pipeline.

School Boundaries: While working at Einstein Elementary, boundaries were adjusted to accommodate a new elementary school. Families at a large Section 8 apartment were moved to the new school where there were fewer English Language Learner opportunities and enrichment programs. Long-time relationships with staff and proximity to school, as many families didn't have cars, was taken away. Majority of these students were students of color.

In closing, a quote from the movie, Just Mercy: “the character of our nation isn’t reflected in how we treat the rich and the privileged but how we treat the poor, the disfavored, and condemned.”

- **Molly Wilson** mcwilson5397@gmail.com

My name is Molly Wilson. I grew up as a student in the Lake Washington School District and now am an English and History teacher. I am proud to be a Lake Washington School District alumna and teacher, however, I am appalled by the silencing of minority voices throughout our schools and the lack of support for Black students in the district. I urge the district to make direct action in supporting minority voices by hiring more teachers of color and teachers with varied identities and lived experiences (including the LGBTQ+ community and Indigenous experience). Hiring teachers from varied identities will not only support the teachers themselves, but also support students with similar backgrounds and experiences; positive role models, and leadership is key to supporting students that do not feel connected to or heard by their white, straight, and/or cisgender teachers. Part of bridging this gap between minority students and teachers requires training and resources for teachers. I demand that the district provide mandatory equity training (specifically regarding racial injustice) so that white teachers can learn and support teachers and students of color. Hiring minority educators is the first step, however, educating white teachers to elevate minority voices is equally as important. Finally, I ask the district to make constant communication with the community regarding Black Lives Matter specifically. The Black community is suffering deeply. The School Board and LWSD’s silence is both disturbing and concerning. I urge the School Board to apologize for their silence and complicity. I urge the School Board to recognize the power their voice holds and denounce systemic racism in our schools (including connections with local police departments and SRO officers in school). I urge the School Board to stand with Black lives.

- **Tara Pozo**, Quest Teacher, tarapozo@gmail.com

My name is Tara Pozo and I teach 2/3 Quest at Thoreau Elementary school. I wanted to voice my support for the letter from the LWEA Executive Committee and the demands that they are making of the board. We are at a point in our district's history where we can make distinct changes to our schools that show our clear support for the Black staff, students and families in our community. I urge you to consider the demands made by the LWEA and to take immediate action on them. We live in a country where systemic racism is woven into all systems. This means that systemic racism is deeply rooted in our schools. We need to take immediate antiracist action to avoid complicity with racism. This will be a massive shift and will require funding and support from the board. I urge you to listen to the experiences of BIPOC community members of LWSD and use their experiences to drive immediate action and change.

- **Elizabeth Prowell**, eprowell@sbcglobal.net

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of all students in our district. I am encouraged to see that our district has an Equity Team. Although I do not have any children in the LWSD, I am in agreement with you that equity is everyone's work.

Having said that, how can I as a resident in the district support this effort? How are current equity initiatives funded? How can we ensure funds for this are not reduced? How can we as a community ensure that the work you have already started continues well into the future?

- **Cleo Rohn**, 9th grade EHS teacher, crohn@lwsd.org

From the moment I first heard of LWSD, I heard about the district's values of equity and inclusion. In practice, I have not known this to be the case. When I came in for my teaching interview, I was met by an interview committee made up of entirely white faces. I did not feel intimidated or endangered by this fact, as I am white myself. But I have been personally told by my incredible colleagues of color that this was an incredibly intimidating experience, made especially uncomfortable when these all-white interviewers tried to tell them about the school's commitment to diversity.

I am proud to work at Eastlake, yet disheartened by the fact that we have only one black teacher in our faculty and only a handful of teachers of color. These few are constantly tokenized, met with microaggressions, and burdened with doing the work of educating white colleagues on racism. It is unfair, it is violent, and we should hold ourselves to a higher standard for the sake of our colleagues, our children, and the world we wish to see.

I am asking for a deliberate push to seek out and hire people of color, particularly BIPOCs, in teacher and leadership positions across the district. To go hand-in-hand with this, I request that the district make an honest, sustained effort to be a space where these new hires feel safe to work. It is not enough to bring a new teacher of color into a school in which they are tokenized or met with an unwillingness to acknowledge racism. I ask the board, what will you do to hold every one of us accountable for doing anti-racist work inside the classroom and within our school communities?

In this era of injustice, we have seen companies and organizations make vague statements and empty promises of equality. I have faith that Lake Washington can rise above this and be a true leader in the fight for racial equity, starting with the makeup of our schools and the training of our teachers.

- **Colin Tracy**, EHS Teacher, ctracy@lwsd.org

On Saturday I had the chance to listen to a local student-led demonstration against the institutionalized racism permeating our culture and our schools. Five Black students and alumni spoke, and all five described the educational damage they endured in schools with few or no Black teachers. Well-meaning white teachers could not, or did not, make these Black students feel welcome, safe, and valued within their school community. The few Black teachers these students encountered were beacons of hope, sources of strength, and role models of exceptional value. They were also unfairly burdened with the work of teaching anti-racism to their colleagues and supporting the mental health of their Black students while enduring racism themselves. Research backs up these anecdotes. Studies have shown for years that representation in the classroom has significant, measurable, positive outcomes for all students, and especially Black students. Surveys have also shown that Black teachers are too often expected to lead diversity, equity, anti-racist, etc. trainings and committees, advise Black Student Unions, and perform other emotionally draining work to fight the racism that threatens them and their Black students.

In my five years here, I have had precisely one Black colleague who is a teacher. LWSD must do better than that for the sake of our Black students and the benefit of our entire school community. The Board must make recruiting and then supporting Black teachers a top priority going forward. Simply waiting for Black applicants who do not appear is a form of silence. Whatever recruitment strategies are already in place have not worked. This will not be easy, but it is not optional if we are going to live up to the District's ideals of eliminating inequity and "creating a new reality for every single student within the Lake Washington School District."

- **Kyla Thompson**, Finn Hill Middle School, K kthompson@lwsd.org

I am a child of LWSD in many ways. My family and my education are rooted in this district, and I returned to teach. I've always tried to teach students to understand more and do better, as I work to learn and do the same, but it's not enough. I am on my district equity team, I seek information to better understand, but it's not enough. I learn more from my LWEA family, and wrestle with my privilege, but it's not enough. I teach US history, and every year I've gathered more and more resources to tell the stories that are ignored, and tried to counteract the story of the "American Heroes" that worked for their own gains, regardless of the needs of others, but it's not enough. It's not enough because I don't have enough resources, enough understanding, or enough perspective, partly because of my LWSD education, and partly because the goals of the school district don't make it a priority. You can tell the priorities of an organization from its budget, and the LWSD budget clearly does not prioritize equity.

We must do better. The first step is to know what we need to do, which is why we ask for a complete equity audit of the school district. From the highest administrative hiring practices through the books in our school libraries, we need a list of specific things that need to be better. After that we'll need the funding to make it better. This must be a complete district-wide priority, because even if I can do better in my classroom, all of our students need it. We must do better. It is long past time for more than a director and another committee. We must do more.

- **John Norris**, Eastlake Teacher, jnorris@lwsd.org

As an educator in the Lake Washington School District, I encourage you to take immediate action to improve the racial teaching and equity in the district. We are privileged in many ways in this district with community support, excellent teacher support and students in many cases thriving both in our schools and into their future. But if we dig deeper, we see that inequalities exist. Black students perform worse, are disciplined more, and achieve less. The same is true for many BIPOC students.

We must create systems that begin teaching anti-racism from an early age so that are students are given the tools not to be “color-blind” but instead to recognize and fight systems of inequality. We must increase our recruitment of BIPOC teachers so that our BIPOC students can see themselves in the adults they interact with, and our white students can see and learn from the diverse perspectives that come from a diverse workforce.

We are a privileged district and unless we use that privilege to improve the world around us by attacking the systems that create inequalities for our black and brown citizens. I implore you to adopt the steps put forth by the teachers at Eastlake High School and the LWEA.

- **Kate Wold**, EHS Teacher, kawold@lwsd.org

Actions speak louder than words and now is the time for the Lake Washington School district to act on Black Lives Matter and not simply say it. I have seen the Black Student Union stand up to cultural appropriation at Eastlake High School with minimal support. Even subtle ways of racism needs to be addressed by the district. Teachers not in humanities have claimed that it is not their responsibility to teach about equity while not all teachers in the humanities are teaching the same equity content. It cannot be a quick fix, it needs to be action that the district is constantly going to implement over a very long period of time. People have to get on board with this to show our BIPOC students that their lives do matter, their feelings are valid, and their contributions to society have value. It cannot be something we shy away from because we’re nervous as white educators to address. We need to step up and not rely on times of crisis to implement action.

- **Matt Austin**, Eastlake Teacher, maustin@lwsd.org

I have taught at Eastlake High School since 2004, and during that time Eastlake’s staff has become marginally more diverse while the student body has diversified at a much more rapid pace. During that time, though, I have taught alongside only one Black teacher, and interacted with very few Black teachers at any district functions. Our department, school, and district all speak to a commitment to social justice, but these statements belie the district’s failure to recruit, support, and retain Black teachers. Research shows this to be one of, if not *the*, most important elements of creating equity in our schools. These studies clearly show the significant positive outcomes of representation in the classroom. Moreover, we have recently heard more voices of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other students of color alerting us to the fact that they are often made to feel invisible or, worse, unwelcome in our schools. As teachers and community members who care passionately about educating all students, we must commit to better supporting *these* students.

I join with colleagues who are asking that LWSD do better for our entire school community. The board must not simply wait for Black applicants and then accept when they do not materialize. I ask that the Board make recruiting and supporting Black teachers a top priority. This is necessary for Lake Washington School District to live up to its ideals of equity and “creating a new reality for every single student.” Thank you.

- **Shila Hodgins**, Eastlake Teacher, PRIDE Co-Advisor, shodgins@lwsd.org
My name is Shila Hodgins and I am an educator at Eastlake High School. I am writing in support of the demands made by the LWEA Executive Committee regarding racial equity and policy action to combat and dismantle systemic racial oppression. Too long school districts like LWSD have acted as institutions that perpetuate white supremacy, ultimately causing harm to our Black and Brown students, staff members and community. We must do better and hold ourselves accountable.

Our Black and Brown students need to see themselves in leadership positions. They need to see themselves in the curriculum. They need to see themselves being valued at the highest levels of our institution and at the individual level of teachers. This requires active policy changes from the budget, to hiring practices, to a racial equity audit, to reevaluating and defunding the SRO program in schools, to teacher trainings that do not just ask teachers to reflect on racism but entirely change the lens in which we teach. We must listen to our Black students, colleagues, and community.

I look forward to hearing from Dr. Stavem regarding the letter my colleagues and I sent several weeks ago. I look forward to seeing the district reevaluate our past and current actions and actively commit to racial equity work in a way that we have not done before. We must be actively anti-racist.

- **Mary Ellen Olafson**, Kirkland Middle School Teacher, meolafson@gmail.com
I am writing to demand the board take immediate action on every item in the LWEA letter regarding racial equity progress and policy. These items require far more than listening circles and an equity statement placed at the top of the home page on the LWSD website. Thank you for acting on all items urgently.

As a math teacher I believe that review of all curriculum is one critical item on the list, but I ask that the board also include review of the district math pathways as part of correcting systemic racial injustice. When the district considers compressed math courses and algebra criteria at the middle school level, we are following a tradition of American schools leaving black and brown students perpetually behind in mathematics. San Francisco schools abandoned this practice in the 2014-15 school year and they now have solid data to support the benefits of de-tracking mathematics.

Additional research shows that mathematics reform including de-tracking provides higher levels of achievement and opens opportunities for the lowest performing student populations. Math is often seen as a limiter/gateway to higher education since remedial math courses at the college level are taken frequently by students who will never complete their college degree program. Remedial college classes can't fix the harm of tracking which begins so many years earlier. We must do what is necessary at the K-12 level to repair this systemic wrong.

Thank you for considering all available research on math tracking and how we can adjust the culture and mindset of families, teachers, and students around mathematical achievement for a more just school system.

- **Katie Badger**, Redmond High School Teacher, katie.badger@washingtonea.org
I implore the Board to promote racial equity work as the most urgent priority in our school district. As an educator with 20 years in this district, I feel we have no higher priority. We are failing to meet the needs of our Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students. This is not an abstraction or a feeling or a perception. This is not a problem that exists somewhere else. This is a problem that permeates our entire school district. According to the OSPI State Report Card, our Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students are 2-3 times more likely to drop out of our schools and are 2-3 times more likely to be disciplined in our schools. We have work to do. We cannot wait. We must begin by changing our budget, our policies, and our practices that have either perpetuated these disparities or allowed them to persist. Please look to educators and community members, including parents and students, for guidance and direction.
- **Sheri Kabore** sheribillmayer@gmail.com
My school PTSA sent out an email that we could submit comments or questions for the board meeting and shared this email address as the address to send them to. I would love to have these questions be considered/addressed by the school board. Thank you - Sheri Kabore
 1. Has the school/district equity team considered ways to ensure that all students/races/cultures are represented in the curriculum and literature students are reading on a daily basis as well as providing diverse classroom libraries for all classrooms so students have the opportunity to read and see themselves and their peers in their books? What specific social studies/history curriculum does the school use and how does it honor and reflect diverse voices and histories?
 2. Has the school/district looked into ways to recruit and hire more educators/staff/district leadership of color?
 3. What specific steps is the district taking in response to the academic data which highlights disparities in black and brown boys reading and math test scores in comparison to their peers? Are there specific steps the school/district is looking at to support closing this opportunity gap? What trainings/curriculum modifications are being utilized to supplement the curriculum to support more diverse populations of learners?
 4. How are schools/district focusing on the disparity in disciplinary actions for students of color versus their white peers? Is the district considering removing police officers from schools and instead providing funding for nurses/counselors/social workers in each building?

- **Karen Murk**, John Muir Teacher, kmurk@lwsd.org

On Thursday June 11th I sent an email to the leadership of LWSD regarding my concerns with equity practices and the lack of a reasonable response to our current racial crisis. Please let it be noted that I have still not received a response from leadership twelve days later.

This is concerning and disheartening on many levels. Firstly due to the absence of an invitation to engage about the events that impact our daily lives, particularly of our students and staff members who identify as Black, but also because I received a timely response to other emails which I sent out to surrounding school districts and public agencies. Not only did I receive personalized email responses, on several occasions I received phone calls from school leaders who are interested in engaging in difficult conversations and wanting to genuinely listen so they may take steps to be different as soon as logistically possible.

In my email twelve days ago, I shared that I am a member of both my building's equity team and the district equity cohort where I continue to grow and learn on how to engage courageously in conversations on race and equity. A major concern is that this opportunity is just that. Not a commitment and enrollment by all staff and leadership, but rather an option. To be in the business of education we should not hold being trained on equity as an optional component, but that a central thread we are required to participate in. If it wasn't evident before May 25th 2020 then I pray that it is today. The stakes are too high, and the time is now to reassess so that we may be clear publicly that we, LWSD, need to do better.

I stand with my request that the following equity issues require immediate address:

1. Declaration that Black lives matter & LWSD is committed to anti-racist equity work
2. A serious equity lens on all social media and all communications
3. Discontinuation of the partnership with local police departments
4. Coordination of equity trainings with LWEA & PTSA leadership
5. A system to translate documents consistently & reliably
6. Assessment of curriculum to ensure historical & cultural accuracy - in particular that of US History
7. Official forums to LISTEN to employees, students, and families of color
8. Equity on our annual LEAP plans
9. Transparency and dissemination of district equity work and goals
10. Culturally diverse board of directors & culturally diverse district level administrators

Once again, I am calling on our district leadership to reevaluate that what we say we believe aligns to what actions are taken. I look forward to an invitation to discuss my concerns.

- **Christina deVidal**, Eastlake High School Teacher, cdevidal@lwsd.org

My name is Christina deVidal and I have been teaching in the Lake Washington School District since September of 2006. When the news was full of protest after the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, our district was slow to acknowledge and respond with support, but eventually we did. I have watched our district move from a 1 day training for multicultural education in my first year, to having mandatory Culturally Responsive teaching several times a year, but it is not enough. We have led with our best intentions but have not achieved results quickly enough, instead we move too slowly to respond to a need that our students have right now. And now I believe that we are still moving too slowly.

As we plan for the challenges ahead with Covid-19, addressing the opportunity gap in our school should be at the heart and focus of all of our work to prepare. As a district, we need to actively recruit and hire more staff of color at every level. As a staff, we need more support and training to become anti-racist teachers so we can become an antiracist school district. We need more mandated equity training in schools, including training for counselors to engage with students of color. We need to ensuring ALL safe spaces for students of color in every school in our building and in every remote learning plan. We must do better.

- **Greta Climer**, gretacl@hotmail.com

I write as parent of a 2020 graduate from Lake Washington High School, parent of an incoming 10th grader to LWHS, parent volunteer, guest staff and community member.

With urgency I implore LWSD to become an antiracist school district. Educating administrative and teaching staff on how to be antiracist is the first step. You are in positions of power, are largely living experiences of white privilege and can immediately create a school and district which is actively antiracist thereby fostering learning for all.

- Listen to Gloria Henderson.
- Read White Fragility
- Read So You Want To Talk About Race
- Read Me and White Supremacy
- Decolonize the curriculum
- Remove SROs from our schools
- Invest in ELL
- Scrutinize behavioral and academic actions towards BIPOC students
- Scrutinize policy

You can commit and we can do better for all students.

Juanita High School Mascot

- **Libby Finerty**, former LWSD student and community member, libbyfinerty@icloud.com
It has come to my attention that the mascot at Juanita High School is racist. This is completely unacceptable and has no place in society, let alone our schools. “The Rebel”, as you may know, is a symbol of the confederacy and the preservation of slavery. It is my understanding there was a vote by the students to change the mascot in 2018, but did not pass. This is an administration decision. Any administration that does not stand for equity and denounce racism does not deserve to continue to serve in our schools.

I implore you to do the right thing; change Juanita High School’s mascot immediately and show your support to the students and citizens of color.

- **Elizabeth Standal**, standalem@hotmail.com
I'm writing as a longtime Kirkland (Juanita) resident and graduate of Lake Washington High School. I urge LWSD to take action to change the Juanita High School "Rebels" mascot. It's past time to stop romanticizing and idealizing that era of US history. Making this change will send a strong message that all students are welcome in LWSD.

Will the Board commit to making this change?

- **Theresa Harrington**, JHS Class of 1988 & Parent of a JHS Class of 2018, 2020 and 2022; JHS PTSA Secretary, tk.harrington@frontier.com
As Juanita High School alumni, parent and current PTSA board member, I am writing to share my thoughts on the JHS mascot issue. At this moment in time, it seems like no matter how you felt about the mascot in the past, no matter what the “original intent” of the name and logo were, the truth is, at some point, (and this was true during my time JHS evidenced by the yearbook photo being used on the petition) the confederate flag was brought in as an unofficial school symbol. Whether this was a sign of a giant blind spot in understanding of the painful legacy that flag represents, an inditement of sanitized US history curriculum or an expression of outright prejudice and bigotry is unclear. What is clear, is that at some point that flag and the Juanita Rebels were associated. This is a fact, not an opinion. The intent and impact of that fact can be debated, but sadly that fact cannot be erased. We as a community, as alumni, students, parents and PTSA members need to own and acknowledge that fact. It is hard, especially when a community has to acknowledge that their own ignorance and lack of understanding has caused fellow members of the community pain. Minority members of our community have clearly shared that the JHS mascot, results in feelings of exclusion, threat and danger.

Ensuring that every student feel safe at school is or should be the first priority of school boards, administrators, teachers and the PTSA. For that reason, this decision should not be a strictly student led decision as is current District policy. We don’t leave other safety concerns up to a vote of the students.

We also need to acknowledge that there may be many students, alumni and parents who were against the change two years ago and are suddenly finding themselves in favor of it now. This is not necessarily a sign of hypocrisy, it can be a sign of growth. Taking in new information and context and allowing it to change your thinking is not hypocritical, it is the definition of education. My favorite quote from Maya Angelou is “when you know better, do better.” If we now know better, it is time to do better. The school board needs provide leadership and policy to ensure that the school environment remains a welcoming and inclusive place for all.

I was and am a proud Juanita Rebel and Rebel parent. The fact that there is now deep shame and pain associated to something that also gives me great pride is a difficult dialectic to reconcile. But when you think of it, a Rebel by definition is an agent of change. We cannot uphold our Rebel tradition without being open to change.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

- **Grace Harrington, staygraceful@outlook.com**

My name is Grace Harrington and I am a Juanita High School alumna and a future educator. I am writing to you about your policy on changing a school’s mascot. From my experience in classrooms as both a student and a teacher, I know, and I’m sure you are aware, of the impact a school environment can have on students and their ability to learn. In the case of your existing policy on changing a mascot by student vote only, and the Juanita High School mascot, you are failing to ensure your students can have a learning environment where they feel safe, heard, and valued. This policy needs to change to ensure the preservation of safe learning environments for all students and to recommit this district to racial justice, in a time in our history where that is more vital than ever.

The Juanita High School “Rebel” mascot is harmful to its student population and wider community. The way in which racist symbolism is intertwined with this mascot, the rallying point of an institution of learning, is unacceptable. Regardless of original intent, this mascot and what it has come to represent has created hostility and discomfort for students. This has no place in a school and is detrimental to creating an environment conducive to learning; one truly committed to student well-being.

The change in policy and mascot is more than a suggestion, it is a matter of listening to and respecting the dignity of your students. All students deserve a learning environment where they feel safe. How else are they to learn without that? A matter of this weight, that concerns student safety and ultimately students’ ability to thrive in their school community, should not be left up to only the votes of other students. As the people responsible for student education and safety you must be involved, as this is a safety matter. This is a moment to learn and grow by changing policy and taking action to protect students and create a school space where they know they can be heard and learn safely.

I will end with this, your district's mission states, "...students will graduate prepared to lead a rewarding, responsible life as a contributing member of our community and greater society". Well, I am a graduate of this district, and I am now using my voice to responsibly engage with and contribute to my community and our greater society. The other individuals speaking up and fighting for this change, many of whom are LWSD students, are fulfilling your mission. Now is the time to listen, now is the time for action.

- **Ella Dorwin, s-EDORWIN@lwsd.org**

I am a student at Juanita High School, and I have concerns about the mascot of our school. As you know, the 'Rebels' mascot has very racist connections which are and were seen around campus, such as a painting of a confederate soldier that was present on the inner walls of our field house up until last year. The current mascot makes some students feel unsafe at our school, which claims to strive to give every student a sense of inclusion and belonging. The 'Rebels' mascot does not portray the values of JHS, and should be changed immediately.

- **Hanako Mantooth, s-HMANTOOTH@lwsd.org**

I am a student at Juanita high school and am one of the many students here that find the mascot of the rebels disturbing and inappropriate. The name has racist connections and I'm surprised it even took so long for the painting of the confederate soldier to be removed. It's very unnecessary and there are so many better options. The fact that it could make students feel uncomfortable at school is unacceptable. We want our school to feel like a whole and the name ties back to a time when we out country had horrible motives. It would really help the community if we changed the mascot to something we can all relate and bond over.

- **Kristen Dorwin, kdorwin@gmail.com**

My name is Kristen Dorwin, and I live in the Juanita Community. I have a student at Finn Hill Middle School and a student at Juanita High School. I have been an active volunteer in the school and community since my oldest started kindergarten at Sandburg Elementary.

I am commenting today in support of changing the mascot at Juanita High School. The current "Rebels" mascot has a painful history and is strongly correlated with racism and the Confederacy. The current policy for changing the mascot places undue burden on our students, and when last attempted, devolved into an extremely uncivil process, which included students being called names by adults in our community.

The Lake Washington School District's Strategic Priority on Well Being states that "We create safe, welcoming, and inclusive places to learn for students and staff...We believe that all students must be safe and feel a sense of belonging if they are to succeed." The current mascot does not align with this priority.

We are moving into a beautiful new building this fall. Now is the time to take advantage of the fresh start and respectfully retire the old mascot. Your actions will be a clear indication to the community of your true priorities and values.

- **Kimberly Boss**, kimberlyboss@mac.com

As a Juanita High School alumni (class of '86) I want to voice my support for changing the school's mascot to something not associated with the civil war. The school's historical stance on the rebel as a mascot was that it was a reference to the Revolutionary War. In my lifetime, rebel has always been associated with the Civil War. My classmates knew this when they ran around at football games with a confederate flag. There's even a picture of it in our yearbook.

I posted something about this on our FB class of '86 alumni page this morning and the responses from a few, very angry, alumni in support of keeping the rebel mascot despite it's racist overtone was surprising to me. Since those of us for changing the name seem to be a quieter, more rational group, I wanted to let you and the other school board members know that there are those of us who stand against racism in all aspects of life, including public schools. I don't live in the Pacific Northwest anymore but Juanita will always be my alma mater. I would like that to be a source of pride and not embarrassment.

Thank you in advance for discussing this at the school board meeting and giving it the consideration it deserves.

- **Jennie Jaeger**, jennie.jaeger@gmail.com

I am the parent of a rising 10th grader at JHS. My whole family is STRONGLY in favor of getting rid of the "Rebel" mascot. However, let's not repeat the disastrous student-vote in 2018 on this topic that led to majority students bullying minority students.

Instead, I urge the school board to define allowable types of school mascots in the district in such a way that the "Rebels" mascot or the names of Native American tribes, for example, are rejected. For instance, mascots could be required to be non-human and/or required to be inclusive of all students. Additionally or alternatively, a school district representative or the school board could be given the power to reject candidate mascots that are inappropriate.

Every time the principal says something like, "Rebels respect their teachers and follow the rules," it is extremely clear that "Rebels" does not mean that the school focuses on a healthy skepticism of authority. Even after the removal of the picture of the confederate flag image from JHS's mascot, the "Rebels" mascot name at JHS clearly refers to adherents of confederate ideology. My son is a big fan of the 13th and 14th amendments and has no nostalgia for slave-labor. The purpose of a mascot is to encourage school pride and spirit, but the JHS "Rebel" mascot is instead cringe-worthy and offensive.

Please let me know what policy changes the school board can make that would get rid of the "Rebel" mascot as well as prevent other non-inclusive mascots from being adopted in the future.

- **Jennifer Loy, jennifer_loy@hotmail.com**

I was taken aback by seeing the media interview by the Juanita High School alumni Jayden M. I have a problem with the fact that she is actively promoting a false narrative. It and she infers that today, the school is embracing the "confederate flag" and repeatedly shows a logo and a yearbook photo from the late 80's or early 90's. (King 5 & KIRO) There is not a mention of the changed imagery (logo) let alone showing it. There is no confederate flag or reference being used at Juanita at all. She literally is calling for the school to "denounce the confederate flag..." This makes no actual sense but, clearly will get someone's attention.

I also saw the social media post to get out her petition. Old imagery and a false or outdated narrative is used to shock and then engender readers so that they are motivated to sign her petition. Many are signing based on lies and misrepresentations.

She is using false pretenses to disparage the school, stoke unrest in the community and misrepresent the current environment and students at JHS to achieve her unrealized goal as a student.

I realize many people would like to see the name rebel changed for their own reasons just like many would like to keep it the way it is. Like many words, they can have a positive and a negative connotation. Juanita Rebels is used in a way to evoke a positive, competitive, and innovative connotation.

Whatever way the chips fall here, it saddens me that this is the way this is going down. A move to "end-around the current students vote" by those with "sour grapes" because they didn't get their way two years ago. Of course, there will not be a loud counter, save the Rebel group as those who want to will...be called racist.

This is not a "new group" or a new set of people, let alone current students, that have recently felt there was some injustice done to them because of the name rebel. This is the exact SAME people who were voted down two years ago and no longer attend the school. That absolutely matters. You don't win every vote and you don't always get your way. You should not think that you'll get to change the rules every time you lose a vote. If another vote happens, it should be championed by current students and voted on by current students alone.

To take advantage and tie their failed mascot changing campaign in 2018 to a positive BLM movement, bring negative and unwarranted PR to the staff, students and alumni at JHS is not helpful. I don't think the Juanita Student Body is racist. I don't think being the Rebels is racist. Using racism and the term racist to get your way is wrong. Bullying in all forms is also wrong.

I hope that the school district sticks to the current policy for changing school logos and that the school board supports this. There is no evidence that some horrible injustice has recently happened to anyone because of the name Rebels where parents, alumni, the district or PTA members need to jump in right now and overrule the students.

I hope you will not cave to the mob looking for you to ***opportunistically hurry to change a policy based on a false narrative*** due to heightened emotion around a national issue that does not have anything to do with Juanita High School's Rebels name or the current school culture.

- **Judy Field, fieldjudyl@gmail.com**

I am writing to add my support to the Juanita mascot change. This is the right time to be on the right side. The Rebel mascot is an offensive symbol that should have been abolished years ago.

All of our students should feel that their school is a safe and welcoming place to be. School should not be another structure that makes some students feel less than. They should not be confronted daily with a symbol representative of the confederate flag. Why should any of our students be forced to embrace anything that promotes racism, when they are taught to embrace diversity?

I realize change is hard, but this is a perfect opportunity to re-examine how we have all contributed to racism, surely one is silence. Let us truly make Juanita a structure that embraces all students and cultures and remove this negative symbol. Mercer Island achieved the same task in 2018, Lake Washington school district can make this happen in 2020 and open the school year with a fresh start.

- **Kirstin Larson, kirstinlarson@hotmail.com**

Thank you for your tireless work to provide a high-quality education to kids in our community. I know you have the best interest of all students at heart, so I am sure you realize that **it is past time to change the JHS Mascot.**

I have worked in marketing and branding for three decades. **A brand broadcasts the identity of an organization. It tells people who you are, and what they can expect from you.** If you must explain or correct it, it is certainly working against you.

No matter the intended meaning of "Rebel" or the "rework" of the logo, the name, past iconography, all that goes with it (Rebel Yell, Rebel Pride, etc.) is associated with Confederacy. **That passive racism is woven into student posters, cheers, painted on legacy structures, and will forever be interlaced with the name itself.** Students, teachers of color, and community members have pointed out their discomfort around this year, after year, despite efforts to remove overt connections and connotations.

I served both on the Executive Committee to pass the bond to rebuild Juanita High School as well as on the Design Input Team for the new building. Our vision was a school that would feel like a home for students--one that helps them feel connected and safe. The Rebel Name continues to make members of the JHS family feel unsafe and unwelcome. Even as a former parent, I felt embarrassed to be associated with the school every time I sat in the gym and laid eyes on the "Yosemite Sam" or saw references to "Rebel Pride" painted on posters in the hallways. **The new building should be a modern source of pride for the community, but instead the Rebel name keeps it anchored to a shameful history.**

We are well past the time when we should be leaving this matter to a student vote. That stance keeps students of color under the thumb of the white majority and places undue responsibility for an unpopular change on the shoulders of kids. **Students could choose the new mascot, but you--the school board--are the adults in the room and have the power and responsibility to stand on the right side of history.** Please make a stand today and make the decision to remove "Rebels" as the JHS mascot.

Thanks in advance for rising to the moment and doing the right thing for kids.

- **Regan Boysen**, 1993 Class of JHS, Magna Cum Laude, Totem Lake Rotary Student of the Year 1993, Middle School Teacher in the Snoqualmie Valley School District, regaroonie@gmail.com

As an alumni of Juanita High School, class of 1993, I am writing you to ask you to consider the renaming and re-designation of the JHS mascot from "Rebels" to something else.

As a student at Juanita, I was very concerned with social justice, but I am ashamed to admit I was ignorant of the deeper connotations and history behind the rebel name and flag during that time. Since graduating and expanding my education, I have grown in my understanding of the negative nature of this name and flag among a wider society. I now believe it tarnishes the Juanita community and gives a damaging image to the world. More importantly, it lays an unnecessary burden on the current and future students at Juanita who feel the weight of it.

Just as Juanita had to add walls to the physical building because the open concept didn't work, so too this mascot should be revised and changed because now we know better.

I sincerely hope that Juanita's identity can learn and grow. Isn't that what you ask of the students?

- **Habib Rahbar, MD** habibrahbar@gmail.com

I am a community member who has three boys who eventually may attend Juanita High School. I had absolutely no idea that this high school has a mascot that at one time directly incorporated the stars and bars of the confederacy. Worse, I had no idea that this school has allowed this to persist to the level of incorporating the mascot and school into racist epithets and aimed at predominantly black Seattle High School a few decades ago. Even worse, that the black students and progressive minded students at Juanita High School had petitioned for this racist and hurtful "Rebel" be changed but instead of doing the obvious and correct thing, you allowed non-adults whom you are to be teaching decide what is "right." Please show some real leadership this time. The most marginalized group at your school is hurting, and the nation is finally paying attention to systemic racism. Not only should you change the "rebel" mascot, you should apologize for your past poor decisions and admit you have failed your black students and community. You should pledge to stop making excuses, listen to your black students and community, and act. To do anything less would be absolutely tone deaf to what is happening in this country right now.

- **Jacqueline Davis**, Class of '84, jacquelinejeannenw@gmail.com

I am writing in regards to the proposal to change the Juanita High School mascot from Rebel to a new, less contentious mascot.

I understand that the meaning of “Rebel” has become connected to Civil War and Confederacy imagery over the years, and I am concerned at the connotations and how it may affect students attending Juanita, as well as the image of the school to the public at large. I understand that the Confederate flag has been waved at games, that the image of a Confederate soldier was painted on the walls of the lunch room, and that some very ugly rhetoric and imagery was used at a game with Garfield High School.

Students have asked for changes over the years. It has been a divisive issue. It has only grown more so, I suspect, especially these last few years in America. Race relations have gotten worse. There are calls to pull down Confederate statues, and to remove the names of Confederate generals from military bases. America is reevaluating a lot of things. It is understandable that Juanita High School would also want to reconsider the symbolism associated with it in these times.

I have seen calls to educate everyone that that is not the significance of the term “Rebel.” While I greatly support classes about American history and race relations being offered at Juanita High School, there is the perception of Juanita as being racist that may be impossible to change without changing the mascot.

“Rebel” unfortunately, can be read as a kind of shorthand that excludes black students. It alienates, instead of inspire. And any casual observer of the school may be forgiven to assume that the Rebel is a Confederate Rebel, with everything that goes along with it.

I don't see this as being too sensitive, or nitpicking. I see this petition by the students as showing great thoughtfulness and empathy, and an understanding of the importance of inclusivity. I'm proud of them for doing this. Symbols are powerful, as are words. They make a first impression that education will have little ability to fight against. I support making a change to a mascot, to one that *all* students can be inspired by.

P.S. I am charmed by the suggestion of Juanita Juombats (Wombats).

- **Jessica Marques**, Krista "Kipp" Diaz, JHS Class of 1998, Janet Kipp, Parent-2 alumni & community member, JHS PTSA Co-President, 1996-98, Jessica "Kipp" Marques, JHS Class of 1994, jesskippmarques@gmail.com

We are writing to express concern over the current Juanita High School mascot, "Rebels". We understand that the original vision for this mascot was to represent our country's rebellion from British rule. However, the modern day "Rebel" is much more closely associated with the Confederacy. Indeed students, faculty and school staff, as well as the community have mistaken the mascot for a symbol of the Confederacy and thus a symbol of racism and white supremacy throughout the mascot's 50 year history. At various points in our school's history, black students and staff as well as allies have respectfully asked for a change in the mascot to one that does not conjure images of hate and racism and have been denied.

Addressing systemic racism is important in all aspects of society, but it is particularly important to address racism in schools. In its statement last week condemning racism, the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) stated: "Racism harms children's health, starting from before they are born. A growing body of research supports this, and we cannot ignore the impact." The AAP's statement makes reference to an earlier policy statement on the matter, issued in 2019, in which the academy unequivocally stated "[r]acism is a social determinant of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families." [*The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health*](#), p. 1. The effects are profound not only on the children and youth who are the direct targets of racism, but on those children and youth who are bystanders as well. "Young adults who were bystanders to racism and other forms of victimization as youth experience profound physiologic and psychological effects when asked to recall the memory of a past anchoring event as a victim or bystander *that are comparable to those experienced by first responders after a major disaster.*" [*Id.*](#), p. 4 (emphasis added).

We understand that the student body has voted to maintain the current mascot. Given the disproportionately low number of black students represented within the student body, the Lake Washington School Board should take action to promote a culture of inclusivity and to make children and youth of color feel safe in our schools. This is a time to show leadership and fortitude in the struggle for social justice and to end racism. Our family urges you to change the Juanita High School mascot to one that will unite students, alumni and the community around a symbol without the divisiveness and racist connotations of the current mascot.

- **Claire Vossler**, vossler1c@gmail.com

My name is Claire Vossler, and I am a current student at Juanita High School.

Recently, there has been a lot of debate and discussion about changing Juanita's mascot, the Rebel, and I fully support the notion to change the mascot. To me, a different mascot would not impact my high school memories or my senior year. I'd much rather have a mascot that is inclusive and does not have negative connotations that belittles a certain type of student.

I do not support having the students vote on the decision of changing the mascot because we as students are not emotionally mature enough and lack education on systemic racism, so we are unable to understand the feelings that black students feel when they are forced to accept the history of the Juanita mascot.

I do not believe changing the mascot should be left to a vote by the students, but I would support the notion of having the students vote for the new mascot, for it would allow students to voice their opinions rather than having it chosen for us.

- **Serena Hua**, serenahua1999@gmail.com

My name is Serena Hua and I am a Juanita High School alumna, class of 2018. I am writing to you today concerning Juanita High School's Rebel mascot. After reading many, many comments from older Juanita alumni on Facebook, I have come to the understanding that the Rebel mascot comes from the Revolutionary Rebels, inspired by the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Although I respect these origins, the world has changed since the 1970s and despite the original intent, the interpretation of Rebels has shifted to Confederate Rebels somewhere down the line. I am sure you are aware of the Confederate flag flying at games and accusations of racially motivated comments and actions by former Juanita students and staff towards students of color. These alumni who are fighting to keep this mascot have not been inside Juanita's halls recently and cannot understand the consequences of this mascot for students of color. The symbol of the Rebel that represents this high school allows for microaggressions and biases towards students of color by their peers and even certain staff and faculty members. Within the 50 years since Juanita began welcoming students, multiple incidents have occurred that have contributed to a harmful school culture. It is now clear that Juanita is not welcoming to every single student that walks through those doors.

Whether we are representing Revolutionary Rebels or Confederate Rebels, both historical events include the use of free labor of Black people or keeping the institution of slavery. When we are discussing these topics, it is not up to non-Black people to decide what is and what is not racist or offensive, this is not our place. You and I have never and will never experience the same discrimination or pain as those in the Black community, therefore we must listen to them and believe them. You say you advocate for inclusion and are deeply invested in your community. I hope that your call for inclusion and your concept of community include members who are Black. How can we preach inclusion when we are not including our students of color? The students who are constantly reminded of the pain and suffering of their ancestors, who have grown up asking their mothers about the slurs their peers called them, and fear for their life when going out for a simple jog. If we say that Black lives matter, then we have to include the young, Black students within our own community. Those brave students have spoken up about their concern for what this mascot stands for, so let's listen and take action, show that their voices matter too.

We cannot change the past but we do have the power to change the future. We have the power to make our future students feel safe. I encourage you to reflect on your position of power and the influence you have on the future of this community and consider, what side of history will you choose to be on?

- **Carla Schneider**, carla98027@gmail.com

Angela Davis inspires me with her message, "It is not enough to be non-racist. We must be anti-racist." Being anti-racist means I urge you all to take the lead in removing the "Rebels" as the Juanita High School mascot.

Regardless of whatever the original intent may have been, this mascot has clear ties with the Confederacy. Confederate imagery has been used and celebrated, sending a thinly veiled sanction of racism within the school. **Our Black students and other students of color deserve a school that chooses equality and legitimately denounces racism.** Just updating the logo is inadequate (especially considering there remain logos containing the Confederate swords out in the community and on the internet).

Additionally, our white students deserve a school that grounds them in equality. My white son will be participating in sports at Juanita High School starting this Fall. His father and I feel appalled at the thought of him wearing a uniform linking him to a history of white supremacy.

Say there was a school with the mascot "Nazis" that used the Swastika as its logo. Just changing the logo and saying "Oh, well 'Nazi' means something different now" would not erase the history, the pain, or triggers for the students of groups targeted by the Nazis in WWII. Neither would it create an anti-racist foundation for the white students. Don't let Juanita High School be like that. You have the power to make this change, and at such a momentous time in our history.

Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of all our students.

- **Tracie Wilhelm**, raven0304@icloud.com

I have lived in Juanita for 17 years, and my two children attended Sandburg Elementary and FHMS. Next year they will both be attending JHS, and I implore the board to change the rebel mascot. LWSD has a responsibility and opportunity to take action now. I hope LWSD immediately gathers representative stakeholders who are most affected by this issue- students, staff, parents, the School Board, the City of Kirkland and the Mayor- to LISTEN and AMPLIFY melanated voices in our community and to ACT now rather than leaving it to student vote as in the past and the current policy. JHS has been repeatedly associated with the Confederate flag, and if LWSD does not act, I can only understand current leadership to be in alignment with the values that are represented by that flag. Intent and history have no place in a discussion about racism unless it is in acknowledgment of mistakes made or in education about in how to move forward. I can think of no better words than that of Maya Angelou (Poet, Writer, and Civil Rights Activist) "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."

- **Lynn Osborn**, Kirkland resident, voter, and Juanita High School Teacher, lzsigmundovics@gmail.com
I have written to you before regarding this issue, asking you to make the decision to abolish the current Juanita High School “Rebel” mascot and allow the process to select a new mascot to begin.

There are many opinions about whether this should take place – it is a discussion that has taken place many times, most recently in 2017. As you know, there was a process and a student vote about whether to change the mascot. This is no longer an issue that involves Juanita High School – it is a larger issue that should be made by you, the School Board members. You have stated on the District Equity Website

“If we are silent, we are implicitly saying that the lives of Black people are less than or do not matter. We believe that the lives of Black people do matter. We believe that it is our responsibility to condemn and speak out against discrimination, hate, and racism.”

This is not about whether alumnae or anyone believes that the “Rebel” mascot represents racism. This is about people who are offended by the “Rebel” mascot as a symbol of racism, white supremacy, and inequity. We cannot be insensitive and say that because some people don’t see it as offensive, then it isn’t. We MUST acknowledge and validate the experience of those who have been victims of racism and inequity. That is what this decision is about. Supporting the belief that Black Lives Matter!

I implore you to take this first step in leading our district toward a more equitable, supportive, and safe environment for all people, especially POC. As you said in your statement, if we are silent, we are complicit in contributing to the problem of racism. It is uncomfortable work, but it essential that we begin to become comfortable being uncomfortable in order to make the changes that our society needs.

You can begin here in this district with this specific decision.

- **Eli Vossler**, JHS Class of 2018, exv@pdx.edu
My name is Eli Vossler, and I am an alumnus of Juanita High School, class of 2018. I am writing to ask you to consider renaming the JHS mascot the “Rebels” and to consider changing the policies of changing the school mascot.

For years I have been an advocate of social justice, but the history behind the school’s mascot was unknown to me. I was unaware of how so many students were uncomfortable with the mascot and flag, and Juanita staff did not step up to educate us on its background. As I have moved on to college and expanded my horizons, I can now acknowledge the large impact of what this mascot means to so many community members, and, more importantly, the students.

High school students should not hold all the responsibility to create a safe, welcoming space. As 14-18-year old’s, we did not have enough experience to approach the vote with empathy, and we lacked any understanding of the systemic racism that plagues our society and community today. Please think of the current and future students who want this change. They were not listened to before; we should not make the same mistake. Now is the time to take action and create a safer space for every student.

- **Kelsey Field**, Class of 2003, kelsfield@gmail.com

I am writing in support of changing the mascot at Juanita High School, a debate that has been going on for decades now and yet with no definitive ending or action on the part of the school board, and school itself.

For many, the argument is that to change the mascot will change the school. That changing the mascot is yet another sign of the sensitive millennial population, that making it something different somehow will alter the memories they hold of their time in high school. The arguments against changing the mascot very clearly come from those with a privileged background, for whom the message of a Rebel and the connotations of slavery, a civil war, and human rights is not a fight they've had to endure.

However, school is a place for students to be able to grow and learn in a safe place - indeed, it's why we so vehemently protect students ability to learn under Title VI. The Rebel mascot, with its clear connections to the confederacy, makes that virtually impossible for the students of color. A daily reminder that even in the place where they should be the most safe, they are not worth as much as their white colleagues.

Across the country, we are examining our contribution to systemic racism - a system that has been operating since the first slave ships arrived on the shores of the US. It must be rooted out, painful step by painful step. Will some people be mad? Of course. They are the ones who have not fully examined the white privilege they have experienced. They are on the wrong side of history. It is time Juanita High School take the needed steps to end this debate, and finally be on the right side of what matters.

Once a Rebel - always an eagle

- **Abby Main**, former JHS student (phone message)

My name is Abby Main and I graduated from Juanita in 2019. I spent four years at Juanita and even had the opportunity to serve on ASB as the junior rep in the 2017-18 school year. This, as you know, was the year of the vote to change the rebel mascot. I, along with thousands of other students, alumni, staff and community members believe it is well beyond time LWSB steps up to remove this mascot. Instead of launching into the deep racist history of the rebel and the racist history of Juanita as I have many well-spoken peers who will be doing, I simply want to write a piece of insight on why the voting process itself does not work. As a member of ASB, I was one of a handful of students responsible for collecting and counting the votes. I was also responsible for distributing the limited information sheet that was designed by Principal Kelly Clapp. Never once did Kelly Clapp at the J- admin debrief the members of ASB on the voting process and never once did the admin try to connect with the students on this issue. Instead, they pawned off the responsibility of both education and the vote itself on students as young as 14 years old. As someone who held a small position of power at this point, I was able to see the vote from both the administrative side as well as students. I can attest to the way that Clapp and the other administrators wipe their hands from the situation. They worked to distanced themselves in the vote, citing a district policy, one that was created in the wake of the 2018 position. The policy

outlined how many things we needed to start a petition and how many votes would be needed to change the mascot, and a strict code of conduct for staff members barring them from answering questions or educating students on the matter. As we all know, high schools are dominated by “groupthink.” Athletes and another student who had social influence were openly against the change of the mascot. They said they played for the name and that they never saw racism at Juanita. Well, of course, as more students had taken time to educate themselves on the issue and had come to a different conclusion, I cannot hold teenagers totally accountable for this failure. With the little information distributed and radio silence from all trusted adults, you cannot expect high school seems to be experts on racist symbols and the importance of dissolving all connections to the Confederacy. It was in the 60 minute homeroom period where students were expected to cast their ballots and have it collected. This left less than a dozen students running around campus scrambling to gather thousands of paper ballots. From the little information provided to the barring of teachers answering questions on the mascot to the disorganization of the vote itself, this was not a fair process. From the start, the vote was set up to fail. With the power you hold it, you can remove this mascot and avoid making the same mistakes, the leaders of Juanita, myself included, made in 2018; this means of knowledge in the history of the rebel of Juanita as well as the failures of the vote. Across all racial justice echoing around the country, it is up to all of us to account for the way racism prevails in our own lives. I mean, we have the power to do something, as you all do, it is imperative that we act. There's not a lot of diversity in LUSD as we can see reflected by an all-white school board, but it is important that we value students of color, especially the black students, safety, and security higher than we value a symbol, especially when that symbol is rooted in hate. This is about the legacy of Juanita and LUSD. You have the power to change those legacies, to stand for something bigger than all of us and to be on the right side of history. William James said, “The great use of life is suspended for something that while it lasted,” and the JHS high school mascot will certainly outlive us all.

- **Kara Stafford, zebramamayoga@hotmail.com**

I am a Juanita High School Alumni, class of 1995. I would like to voice my full support for changing the school mascot. During my high school years this mascot, crest and the term "Rebel" were repellant to me due to it's ties to slavery and the Confederacy during the Civil war. At the time my concerns were brushed off with the explanation that this was related to the Revolutionary War, which also never quite sat comfortably to me with such a long history of enslavement. I understand these may not have been the original intent when the mascot was chosen but the history of our country and the images associated with it have become inseparable from each other. These things have no place as a high school mascot!

As I discussed this topic with other alumni, it became quite clear to me that the current Rebel as a mascot has a history that has been tied to incidents in the high school that are racially charged: the Confederate flag pictured in year books, flown through the gym at assemblies and football games. Even with an eventual removal of the flag and a revamping of the school crest, racially motivated incidents at school events continued: the flag was painted on students' faces and racial slurs were jeered at competing schools. These events are not acceptable behaviors and they are directly tied to the rebel mascot. This does not promote the inclusive environment that our high school sought to create for all of the student body and we cannot erase the history or the

emotional destruction tied to it. These actions create divisions and send a conflicting message to people of color that "all are welcome- except you." It is time to change.

Across the nation companies and schools are removing such images as we try to heal our nation from centuries of systemic racism and send the message that black lives matter. It is time too for these changes to take place in our own community, to send the message that we stand with and for each other, not against each other. Please consider the message that keeping this mascot will be sending!

Thank you in advance for discussing this at the school board meeting and giving it the consideration it deserves.

- **Karen Girard**, karenemain@comcast.net

When my husband and I arrived in Kirkland to celebrate our niece's graduation last weekend, I was shocked and disappointed to realize that the Juanita High School mascot is a Rebel. The term Rebel has clear links to white supremacy and celebration of the Confederacy and has no place in a public education system.

I asked my family about this and learned that this is an issue that is being discussed currently in the Lake Washington School District. No matter the original intent of choosing the Rebels for a mascot, it is clear that today, this term is offensive and degrading to humanity by its association with the Confederacy.

Institutionalized racism is real, pervasive and devastating to every community, and especially to people of color. It is the responsibility of all of us, and in this case, the Lake Washington School District, to take a stand in addressing these injustices immediately and with conviction.

I urge you to remove the Rebels as the Juanita High School mascot and help create a more inclusive environment for your students and their wider community.

- **Megan Wong**, graduating Senior JHS, submittal of collective letter from JHS Students, megankw1800@gmail.com / *{copy of letter also attached – text below}*

My name is Megan Wong, and I am a graduating senior at Juanita High School. A group of current JHS students and I have written a collective letter regarding Juanita High School's mascot change to be read at the LWSD Board of Directors meeting tomorrow night. We hope the Board is able to discuss its contents at the meeting, as we believe the voices of the current student body are central in this issue.

Every day in the halls of Juanita High School, one hears phrases like "Go Rebs" and "Rebel Pride." Juanita's Rebel mascot is intrinsically tied to the Confederates of the Civil War, a group of states that fought to keep the legal enslavement of Black people. We are calling for the mascot to be removed immediately, as it does not represent Juanita High School and the values we, the students of Juanita, stand for.

We urge the Board to recognize and act upon the following points:

1. The “Rebel” mascot can no longer be tolerated. The Board’s tacit support of it directly contradicts their own June 1st statement on racial equality.
2. The Board has the power and the responsibility to remove the mascot immediately. “Tradition” is an insufficient reason to cling to an outdated and racially insensitive mascot. While Juanita can vote for a new mascot next year, the Rebel mascot falls outside of the normal range of mascots that the regular name-change policy is designed to address.

Background

Juanita’s website argues that the school is a “Rebel” in the sense that it broke educational norms as part of the 1960’s educational change (Vannet). School spirit has always run deep in Juanita’s hallways, but there is a darker side to be informed of. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Confederate battle flag was first popularized in response to calls for equality from the Civil Rights Movement. It is in this context that the Rebel mascot was first voted on by Juanita students in 1971. Students were deciding between two mascots: The Eagles, a common motif of freedom, pride, and strength, or a Rebel as a nod to the American Revolution, according to the school district. The administration failed to acknowledge that soldiers of the Revolutionary War were referred to as Patriots rather than Rebels. Juanita’s association with the Confederacy includes: In 1986, the table of contents of the JHS yearbook proudly flaunted an image of students at a football game with Confederate flags painted on their faces and a physical Confederate flag being waved (fig 1). In the 1990 edition of the Juanita High School yearbook, the front cover featured the Confederate flag (fig 2), and as recently as 2011 an art teacher made a symbol for student spirit gear that was based on a Confederate soldier (fig 3). There are many other examples we could include.

Board Statement

In the Board’s June 1st statement regarding racial inequities within our community, the Board stated “We believe that the lives of Black people do matter. We believe that it is our responsibility to condemn and speak out against discrimination, hate, and racism.” However, this statement remains insincere as long as a blatantly racist symbol continues to represent over 1700 students and 100 staff members each passing year, as well as Juanita’s alumni and general community. By choosing to remain silent on this issue, the Board is ignoring the decades of harm that Juanita’s mascot has inflicted on our Black students, staff, and community members. This is, in their own words, “implicitly saying that the lives of Black people are less than or do not matter.”

Policy Failure

The Name-Changing Policy that the Board created in 2018 was flawed. It is inappropriate to place the students in charge of deciding whether a racist mascot should be removed, especially when the school is 55% White and 3.4% Black (According to LWSD’s Ethnic Enrollment Report). The majority White population of Juanita vastly outnumbered the people directly impacted by the mascot, meaning the Black community was sidelined in an issue that should feature them, perpetuating the systemic racism that our school district is vocally against. Additionally, students were not properly educated on the history of the mascot prior to voting.

Teachers and staff were barred from partaking in the discussion of the mascot, further perpetuating ignorance. Students were not educated on our country's relationship with racism, and they were therefore ill-equipped to understand the meaning and history of the Rebel mascot. The single fact sheet students were presented with hardly addressed the racist history behind the mascot nor the implications it holds in today's society. Because the mascot represents all of Juanita High School, as well as the general community, only allowing the voices of current students was unfair and unreasonable. Peer-pressure mounted to side with "tradition." By pushing the issue onto the students, the district avoided responsibility and acted as a bystander to racial injustice. This vote was a deflection of culpability onto Juanita's student body. Given the "change" versus "no change" nature of this vote, it was a given that most of the student body would side with the status quo.

Call to Action

The needless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other black lives due to the systemically flawed police system only underscores the issues found in all American institutions, including education. While calls to change the mascot may be new, the racist nature of the mascot is not. Due to the Rebel's links to the Confederacy and racist connotation, the LWSD School Board cannot allow the mascot to remain standing. The Board's June 1st statement reads that "we understand, as a Board, that silence is comforting for some and deafening for others. We understand that silence is also complicity ... We believe that it is our responsibility to condemn and speak out against discrimination, hate, and racism." The Board's tacit support for this mascot directly contradicts their own commitment to condemn hate and racism. The Rebel mascot is clearly inappropriate, and it falls outside of the normal range of mascots that the regular name-change policy is designed to address. The Board has both the power and the responsibility to get rid of this mascot. We call upon you to remove the Rebel mascot from Juanita High School. Upon its removal, we as a student body will vote to choose an appropriate new mascot to represent Juanita High School.

We appreciate your time,

Abigail Main, Class of 2020
Alasia McCammon, Class of 2021
Alicja Misiuda, Class of 2021
Anna Helsel, Class of 2022
Arushi Shah, Class of 2022
Christian Wise, Class of 2022
Christina Nis, Class of 2022
Evan Kurtz, Class of 2023
Fiona Wang, Class of 2021
Ivan Maykov, Class of 2022
Jehanara Jaddi, Class of 2022
Jessica Batzel, Class of 2021

Kathy Ngo, Class of 2022
Krista Kamcheff, Class of 2022
Laasya Lanka, Class of 2021
Lizzie Pham-Brehm, Class of 2022
Megan Wong, Class of 2020
Pranathi Ramesh, Class of 2021
Reya Prakash, Class of 2023
Roza Pietrusinska, Class of 2021
Samantha Molina, Class of 2022
Shreva Chirumamilla, Class of 2023
Vivian Bernstein, Class of 2022

- **Melissa Stone**, melissa_nouveau@yahoo.com

I am writing to you today as an LWSD parent and resident of Kirkland to strongly urge you to change the Juanita High School mascot.

There was a missed opportunity in 2018 to change the mascot when the new school was built. I sat in the audience and watched as student of color from Juanita High School came to speak during public comment asking the school board and LWSD to change the mascot. Instead, it was left to the students to make the decision. This led to a mess of an election where students were intimidated, leading to an unsafe environment. The outcome was to keep the offensive mascot.

While the mascot may have been chosen with the best of intentions in the early 70s, the logo was later drawn with racist imagery and the confederate flag was flown at Juanita High School football games. These references are not lost on our students or community. The updated logo that now includes swords, an eagle, and a mountain is merely a band-aid as the name itself still evokes racism and should not be continued to be used in our district.

If we have to explain to even one person why the rebel mascot is not racist, we have a problem. To know of the racist background and to do nothing sends a terrible message about what LWSD stands for. Putting a decision that impacts a marginalized group into the hands of the majority extends systemic racism. I am asking the school board and LWSD leadership to step up and show up what leadership looks like by changing the Juanita High School mascot. Please help make LWSD welcoming, inclusive and safe for all students.

- **Eric Main**, maineric@hotmail.com

In reference to the question of the Rebel mascot at Juanita High School I have often heard the rationalization that the “rebels” being referenced are from the Revolutionary War. Regardless of the original intent I think we can all agree that the perception of the audience or public is important when communicating. So, I tried a simple test. I created a short survey and distributed it via facebook. Not an entirely random or representative sample of Americans, but a relatively wide representation of mid-40s largely white Americans first impressions of a Rebel as a mascot.

The short answer is that only about 6% of the respondents chose to associate “Rebels” with the Revolutionary War. This percentage held true for respondents living in Washington and those outside Washington, so I don’t believe knowledge of the Juanita mascot specifically skewed the results on this point in any real way.

Put simply, about 94% of Americans originally encountering the Rebel mascot are not going to be thinking of the Revolutionary War when determining what they think of Juanita High School or the district within which it resides.

I would encourage you to rethink and remove this mascot. I do not doubt the goodwill of either the people who originally selected this mascot nor those who are hesitant to see it change now, but the perceptions of those outside that small group are important as well. Mascots are about symbolism. Regardless of what message you are intending to send, it is important to be aware of the message the public is receiving. In many cases today that is a message of bigotry and racism.

- **Barbara Ramey**, bramey1@comcast.net

I am a parent of a student who will attend Juanita High School as a freshman this fall. I have lived and paid property taxes in the district since 1992, and worked for the district from [1993-1997](#). I am a former school PTA board member, Avid and reading program volunteer and an involved parent.

I recently became aware that the district has a policy preventing re-review of school mascot decisions. I understand the students at Juanita High School voted to retain the "rebel" mascot a few years ago.

Our nation is experiencing a heightened awareness of the racial discrimination and injustice facing people of color. The Black Lives Matter movement was either in its infancy when Juanita students last voted, or it hadn't even begun. The Rebels mascot and its ties to the Confederacy must be re-considered, especially in light of current events. Today's students should be educated about the meaning of the Rebels mascot and its ties to the Confederacy, and allowed to re-consider the matter. I hope current students would act with an eye toward social justice. If not, I hope the administration abolishes the Rebels mascot, as racism should not be allowed to stand by popular vote.

I urge you to allow re-consideration of the Rebels mascot. It's the right thing to do.

- **Diana Laforanara**, diana@dianala.com

I support the call to change the name of the Juanita High School mascot.

Board Policy 6970P: Procedure Naming Facilities and Mascots, as it is currently written, does not allow for post-board approval review of mascot names without a student vote. However, it is well within the scope of the school board's authority to change this policy to include a method for reviewing standing mascot names which violate our district's commitment to equity and anti-racism. We cannot expect high school students to have a full understanding of the cultural resonance of mascot names.

As a member of the Equity Team, I believe in amplifying the voices of students and staff of color speaking about the pain that they experience when confronted with racism in our district. The board's current policy, while well-intentioned, does not take into account the fact that in the past we as a district have not listened to and valued the experiences of students and staff of color in our district in the way that we should, and are working to do now, by such measures as hiring an Equity & Inclusion Director, the creation of the Equity Team, and the work towards developing an Equity Policy. These steps are just a beginning, and equity should not be siloed – it should be an ongoing and iterative process.

It is an indisputable fact that the Juanita High School Rebels has been in the past explicitly linked with the Confederate flag and Confederate soldiers. Whether or not that was the original intended association of the name "Rebels" is irrelevant.

I am calling upon the board to change Board Policy 6970P to include language allowing for a board-level review of mascots that violate our district commitment to equity and to undertake such a review of the Juanita Rebels mascot name.

- **Kaye & David Stafford**, kstaf1@icloud.com

As alumni parents of 3 girls who graduated from Juanita High School long ago, we agree it is long overdue to change the Rebel mascot! Growing up in Louisiana, we were mortified to learn of the school's mascot when our firstborn entered JHS! At that time, we were reassured it referenced to the Revolutionary War. As evidenced of the Confederate flag being waved at Juanita High School football games & photo from the yearbook, clearly a lot of students have taken advantage of the name through the years as some quietly felt offended as well as discriminated against. In consideration of any who have been humiliated by it and those who have misused the naming, we request that it be changed.

- **Mariana Alvarez-Tostado**, marianaatd@msn.com

As a parent of two Juanita students I have long been uncomfortable with the mascot name. My first daughter was excited to vote for the change and was disappointed when it did not pass. I understood that the process for a name change was followed. I admit that I was defeated and did not think that I could or should raise my voice demanding change then.

I understand that the name was not originally tied to the confederacy; but over the years there have been shameful times when it became so. When a Black teacher raised his voice against it, a weak response was to change the imagery. When students voted against the change, the administration again tried to separate the name and the logo wear from the racially insensitive name. However, my students report that the N word is used on campus. One of them has seen forwarded messages from students that use it. Our Black students and staff of color are hurt by this name and this alone should warrant a change.

I am a member of the Equity Team and as such we have heard of students that do not feel safe at school. How can we fulfill our vision of students prepared for college, the workplace and personal success if they do not feel safe, their voices heard and their legitimate grievances against a hurtful name to represent them? People arguing to keep the name will use the argument of "tradition" and the "original meaning," but we cannot deny that tradition for years has included the glorification of the civil war's losing side; those that stand in the wrong side of history. In addition, outsiders should not need a disclaimer or lengthy explanation that our "Rebels" name is not racist.

If the school board cannot change the name under the current guidelines and procedures, then we should change those. The school board should intervene in cases where a name or mascot are hurtful or disrespectful to a group of people.

The pandemic has sadly highlighted the many challenges our district faces in terms of Equity. I argue that the Equity office in the district should have a much more relevant role. I applaud the district for creating the position of Equity and Inclusion Director; but it but a small first step.

The Equity Team has tried to get an Equity Policy approved and after three years, the board has not passed it. There is no excuse for this and it should be a high priority.

- **Carol Walker**, carol@househunting.com

I would like to register my desire to have the Juanita mascot name changed. While I am not in the Lake Washington School District, my grandson is and this is not an appropriate name to represent the school.

Transcripts

- **Diana Laforanara**, diana@dianala.com / *{the two documents referenced also attached}*

The high school transcripts of students in our district who are placed at Non-Public Agencies differ from those of other graduates in respects that make it clear they have received special education services, a clear equity and privacy issue. Specifically, the term “contractual school” is on their transcripts, and their NPA classes, mandated under IEPs, are marked as transfer credits. These credits, in many cases, greatly exceed the number of transfer credits allowed by our district rules – an obvious indicator that this student has received special education and/or related services.

I have had multiple conversations with district staff as well as OSPI staff regarding this issue and I was pleased to see a letter from Shannon Hitch that was sent out last summer saying that our district was addressing those transcript issues in part (letter attached). This was a good first step, though in my view an incomplete one. However, despite the span of time that has elapsed since that letter was sent, even the one change that was promised, removing “contractual school” from transcripts, has as yet to be fully realized.

The US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights Dear Colleague Letter: Report Cards and Transcripts for Students with Disabilities (2008), p.2, (attached), concurs with my assertion, “Transcripts may not contain information disclosing students' disabilities. Transcripts are provided to persons other than the student and the student's parents to convey information about a student's academic credentials and achievements. Information about a student's disability, including whether that student received special education or related services due to having a disability, is not information about a student's academic credentials and achievements. Therefore, transcripts may not provide information on a student's disability.”

Please look into and correct this oversight with as much expediency as possible. We owe it to our graduates.

June 22, 2020

Dear LWSD Board of Directors,

As members of the Executive Board, we speak on behalf of the Lake Washington Education Association membership. A change, long overdue, is occurring in our country. The district is obligated, as a public institution, to lead our community towards equity and justice, now and in the future.

Crucially in this effort, the Board of Directors and district leadership must dedicate resources to combatting institutional racism through concrete, defined, and immediate actions to address racial discrimination and racial bias that exists in our schools.

Black students and their families, Black community members, and Black employees of LWSD deserve to know that their lives, their safety, their wellbeing, their work, their futures, and their successes are valued by the district, and that the district is committed to this work in defined, measurable, and actionable ways – through budgeting, policies and practices, training, hiring, curriculum, and communication. The district's budget reflects its priorities, and the budget should change as priorities change. LWSD must make their own commitment to racial equity and justice obvious so that it becomes cultural.

LWEA demands that the Board of Directors and district leadership take the following steps immediately to address systemic racial inequity, racial discrimination, and racism that exists in our schools:

- Implement Black Lives Matter At School Week at all LWSD schools.
- Adopt a budget that clearly prioritizes equity work in our district, including paid racial equity work.
- Make the district's equity page on the LWSD website more visible and ensure that it includes our strategic plan for equity work (particularly racial equity work) and resources for educators, district employees, students and parents to help them grow in the understanding of racial injustice (and other systems of oppression, such as class, sexuality, ability, religion, gender identity).
- Conduct a full racial equity audit, bi-annually, of the district office and all school buildings to bring to light ways white supremacy culture is being perpetuated by any of our institutional practices. The results of each racial equity audit must be published on the district equity page and used to create a racial equity improvement plan.
- Create a plan to implement mandatory, ongoing training on racial equity and bias to be completed every year by all staff. The training plan, which must be published by September 2020 on the equity

page, must be developed in partnership with school equity teams to include a robust and fully funded budget and a timeline for development and implementation in the next school year. This training must be reviewed annually by the district equity team using equity audit results.

- Adopt a school board racial equity policy and a procedure to redress racial equity conflicts which includes independent investigations of reported incidents of racial bias or harassment and mandatory racial equity training for employees and students found to have engaged in racial discrimination. The district equity team has drafted such a policy already.
- Review current district curriculum in grades P-12 for existing ethnic studies and diversity components; by January 2021 implement ethnic studies as a required curricular component for grades 7-12 and integrate racial equity social justice standards into the curriculum for grades P-12 in all subjects.
- Emphasize and prioritize diversity in hiring, including efforts to recruit, hire, and retain diverse district-level leadership; recruit, hire, and retain diverse educators and other staff through programs like micro-credentialing; include equity training as a prerequisite for hiring; and add racial equity knowledge as a component of hiring through the use of interview questions.
- Implement immediately de-escalation training for school security staff and any staff involved in student supervision.
- Defund the SRO program in schools and reallocate these funds to the social, emotional, and health needs of students.

LWEA stands ready to collaborate with the district in prioritizing racial equity work, dismantling racial prejudice, and calling out white supremacy culture in our schools. This work cannot wait for a better time or more funding. We cannot expect someone else to address these issues. We must act now and sustain our work going forward. This will require both direction from the Board of Directors and a partnership between LWSD and LWEA.

Respectfully,

LWEA Executive Committee

To the Lake Washington School District Board of Directors,

Every day in the halls of Juanita High School, one hears phrases like “Go Rebs” and “Rebel Pride.” Juanita’s Rebel mascot is intrinsically tied to the Confederates of the Civil War, a group of states that fought to keep the legal enslavement of Black people. We are calling for the mascot to be removed immediately, as it does not represent Juanita High School and the values we, the students of Juanita, stand for.

We urge the Board to recognize and act upon the following points:

1. The “Rebel” mascot can no longer be tolerated. The Board’s tacit support of it directly contradicts their own June 1st statement on racial equality.
2. The Board has the power and the responsibility to remove the mascot immediately. “Tradition” is an insufficient reason to cling to an outdated and racially insensitive mascot. While Juanita can vote for a new mascot next year, the Rebel mascot falls outside of the normal range of mascots that the regular name-change policy is designed to address.

Background

Juanita’s website argues that the school is a “Rebel” in the sense that it broke educational norms as part of the 1960’s educational change (Vannet). School spirit has always run deep in Juanita’s hallways, but there is a darker side to be informed of. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Confederate battle flag was first popularized in response to calls for equality from the Civil Rights Movement. It is in this context that the Rebel mascot was first voted on by Juanita students in 1971. Students were deciding between two mascots: The Eagles, a common motif of freedom, pride, and strength, or a Rebel as a nod to the American Revolution, according to the school district. The administration failed to acknowledge that soldiers of the Revolutionary War were referred to as Patriots rather than Rebels. Juanita’s association with the Confederacy includes: In 1986, the table of contents of the JHS yearbook proudly flaunted an image of students at a football game with Confederate flags painted on their faces and a physical Confederate flag being waved (fig 1). In the 1990 edition of the Juanita High School yearbook, the front cover featured the Confederate flag (fig 2), and as recently as 2011 an art teacher made a symbol for student spirit gear that was based on a Confederate soldier (fig 3). There are many other examples we could include.

Board Statement

In the Board’s June 1st statement regarding racial inequities within our community, the Board stated “We believe that the lives of Black people do matter. We believe that it is our responsibility to condemn and speak out against discrimination, hate, and racism.” However, this statement remains insincere as long as a blatantly racist symbol continues to represent over 1700 students and 100 staff members each passing year, as well as Juanita’s alumni and general community. By choosing to remain silent on this issue, the Board is ignoring the decades of harm that Juanita’s mascot has inflicted on our Black students, staff, and community members. This is, in their own words, “implicitly saying that the lives of Black people are less than or do not matter.”

Policy Failure

The Name-Changing Policy that the Board created in 2018 was flawed. It is inappropriate to place the students in charge of deciding whether a racist mascot should be removed, especially when the school is 55% White and 3.4% Black (According to LWSD’s Ethnic Enrollment Report). The majority White population of Juanita vastly outnumbered the people directly impacted by the mascot, meaning the Black community was sidelined in an issue that should feature them, perpetuating the systemic racism that our school district is vocally against. Additionally, students were not properly educated on the history of the mascot prior to voting. Teachers and staff were barred from partaking in the discussion of the mascot, further perpetuating ignorance. Students were not educated on our country’s relationship with racism, and they were therefore ill-equipped to understand the meaning and history of the Rebel mascot. The single fact sheet students were presented with hardly addressed the racist history behind the mascot nor the implications it holds in today’s society. Because the mascot represents all of Juanita High School, as well as the general community, only allowing the voices of current students was unfair and unreasonable. Peer-pressure mounted to side with “tradition.” By pushing the issue onto the students, the district avoided responsibility

and acted as a bystander to racial injustice. This vote was a deflection of culpability onto Juanita's student body. Given the "change" versus "no change" nature of this vote, it was a given that most of the student body would side with the status quo.

Call to Action

The needless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other black lives due to the systemically flawed police system only underscores the issues found in all American institutions, including education. While calls to change the mascot may be new, the racist nature of the mascot is not. Due to the Rebel's links to the Confederacy and racist connotation, the LWSD School Board cannot allow the mascot to remain standing. The Board's June 1st statement reads that "we understand, as a Board, that silence is comforting for some and deafening for others. We understand that silence is also complicity ... We believe that it is our responsibility to condemn and speak out against discrimination, hate, and racism." The Board's tacit support for this mascot directly contradicts their own commitment to condemn hate and racism. The Rebel mascot is clearly inappropriate, and it falls outside of the normal range of mascots that the regular name-change policy is designed to address. The Board has both the power and the responsibility to get rid of this mascot. We call upon you to remove the Rebel mascot from Juanita High School. Upon its removal, we as a student body will vote to choose an appropriate new mascot to represent Juanita High School.

We appreciate your time,

Abigail Main, Class of 2020
Alasia McCammon, Class of 2021
Alicja Misiuda, Class of 2021
Anna Helsel, Class of 2022
Arushi Shah, Class of 2022
Christian Wise, Class of 2022
Christina Nis, Class of 2022
Evan Kurtz, Class of 2023
Fiona Wang, Class of 2021
Ivan Maykov, Class of 2022
Jehanara Jaddi, Class of 2022
Jessica Batzel, Class of 2021
Kathy Ngo, Class of 2022

Krista Kamcheff, Class of 2022
Laasya Lanka, Class of 2021
Lizzie Pham-Brehm, Class of 2022
Megan Wong, Class of 2020
Pranathi Ramesh, Class of 2021
Reya Prakash, Class of 2023
Roza Pietrusinska, Class of 2021
Samantha Molina, Class of 2022
Shreva Chirumamilla, Class of 2023
Vivian Bernstein, Class of 2022

Images

Figure 1

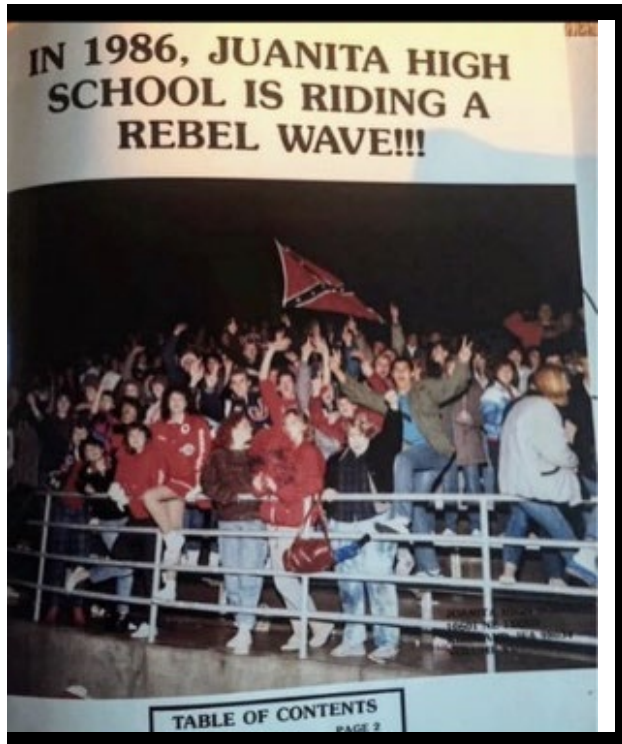


Figure 2



Figure 3



Works Cited

School History - Juanita High. <https://jhs.lwsd.org/about-us/school-history>. Accessed 19 June 2020.

"Lake Washington School District." *Enrollment Report*, 2019, www.lwsd.org/about-us/enrollment-report.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The Office for Civil Rights in the United States Department of Education issues this guidance to provide state and local education agencies with information concerning disclosure of disability on report cards and transcripts for students with disabilities attending public elementary and secondary schools, under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (29 U.S.C. § 794) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 104) and Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* (42 U.S.C. § 12131 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulation (28 C.F.R. Part 35). As appropriate, this document also discusses two other relevant federal laws, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.*) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 300) and the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (20 U.S.C. §1232g) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 99).

This guidance represents the Department's current thinking on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person. This guidance does not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable law and regulations.

If you are interested in commenting on this guidance, please email us your comment at OCR@ed.gov or write to us at the following address: U.S. Department of Education; Office for Civil Rights; 400 Maryland Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20202.

OCT 17 2008

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to you to address some issues concerning report cards and transcripts for students with disabilities attending public elementary and secondary schools. Through this letter and the enclosed Questions and Answers document, I am clarifying how federal laws apply to statements on report cards and transcripts when these statements identify students as students with disabilities.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the United States Department of Education (Department) has enforcement responsibilities under two of the applicable federal laws -- Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) and Title II of the *Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990* (Title II). Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance, and Title II prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities, including public elementary and secondary school systems, regardless of receipt of Federal financial assistance. As part of their disability nondiscrimination mandates, Section 504 and Title II require local education agencies (LEAs) to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified individuals with disabilities in their jurisdiction. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.33 and 28 C.F.R. § 35.103(a).

Other federal laws are also relevant. Through the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), the Department of Education administers the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, which provides funds to states to assist in making FAPE available to

eligible children with disabilities. *IDEA* requirements apply to state education agencies (SEAs), school districts, and other public agencies that serve *IDEA*-eligible children. The Department's Family Policy Compliance Office implements and enforces the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*. *FERPA* protects the privacy interests of parents and students with regard to education records, and generally prohibits a policy or practice of disclosing personally identifiable information from education records without consent unless it is subject to a specific exemption.

Report cards and transcripts convey information about students. LEAs issue report cards to parents to indicate their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, or curriculum. These report cards are made available to parents, not to postsecondary institutions, potential employers, and others outside the LEA. In contrast, a student's transcript generally is intended to inform postsecondary institutions or prospective employers of a student's academic credentials and achievements. Accordingly, there is an expectation that a student's transcript could be shared with persons other than the student and the student's parents.

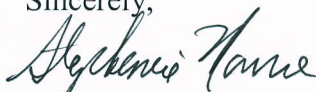
For students with disabilities, questions arise about whether the information conveyed by report cards and transcripts can include information about the students' disabilities, including whether those students received special education and related services. As discussed in the enclosed Questions and Answers document, under federal disability discrimination laws, the general principle is that report cards may contain information about a student's disability, including whether that student received special education or related services, as long as the report card informs parents about their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, or curriculum, consistent with the underlying purpose of a report card.

However, transcripts may not contain information disclosing students' disabilities. Transcripts are provided to persons other than the student and the student's parents to convey information about a student's academic credentials and achievements. Information about a student's disability, including whether that student received special education or related services due to having a disability, is not information about a student's academic credentials and achievements. Therefore, transcripts may not provide information on a student's disability.

The enclosed Questions and Answers document provides additional information concerning the determination of what statements and notations may be used on report cards and transcripts for students with disabilities.

Compliance with Section 504 and Title II principles in reporting student achievement is one means of providing students with disabilities with equal educational opportunity. I look forward to continuing our work together to improve educational outcomes for all students with disabilities.

Sincerely,



Stephanie J. Monroe
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Enclosure



United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights

October 2008

The Office for Civil Rights in the United States Department of Education issues this guidance to provide state and local education agencies with information concerning disclosure of disability on report cards and transcripts for students with disabilities attending public elementary and secondary schools, under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (29 U.S.C. § 794) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 104) and Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.) and its implementing regulation (28 C.F.R. Part 35). As appropriate, this document also discusses two other relevant federal laws, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 300) and the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (20 U.S.C. §1232g) and its implementing regulation (34 C.F.R. Part 99).

This guidance represents the Department's current thinking on this topic. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person. This guidance does not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable law and regulations.

If you are interested in commenting on this guidance, please email us your comment at OCR@ed.gov or write to us at the following address: U.S. Department of Education; Office for Civil Rights; 400 Maryland Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20202.

Questions and Answers on Report Cards and Transcripts For Students with Disabilities Attending Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

RELEVANT FEDERAL LAWS

1. **What federal laws can help address questions about what information about disability may appear on report cards and transcripts for students with disabilities attending public elementary and secondary schools?**

Section 504 and Title II - Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Title II of the *Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990* (Title II) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities, including public elementary and secondary school systems, regardless of receipt of Federal financial assistance. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the United States Department of Education (Department) has enforcement responsibilities under both of these laws. As part of their disability nondiscrimination mandates, Section 504 and Title II require local education agencies (LEAs) to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified individuals with disabilities in their jurisdiction. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.33 and 28 C.F.R. § 35.103(a).

Section 504 and Title II do not have specific provisions addressing report cards or transcripts. The regulations implementing Section 504 and Title II make clear that in general, Section 504 and Title II prohibit recipients and public entities from treating persons differently on the basis of disability in the provision of aid, benefits, or services. However, recipients and public entities may provide a different aid, benefit, or service to persons with disabilities where necessary to provide an aid, benefit, or service that is as effective as that provided to others. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)(1)(i)-(iv) and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(iv). Among the aid, benefits, and services provided to students and parents are report cards and transcripts. Section 504 and Title II do not contain specific confidentiality requirements, but do prohibit different treatment on the basis of disability. This generally would prohibit unnecessary disclosures of disability status to third parties.

Other federal laws are also relevant.

IDEA – Through the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), the Department of Education administers the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, which provides funds to states to assist in making a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to eligible children with disabilities. *IDEA* requirements apply to state education agencies (SEAs), school districts, and other public agencies that serve *IDEA*-eligible children.

IDEA does not have specific provisions on student report cards or transcripts, but does require that the individualized education program (IEP) for a child with a disability include a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals set forth in his or her IEP will be measured and when periodic reports on the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be provided (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards). 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(III); 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(3). These periodic progress reports may be separate from, or included as part of, the regular report cards of students with disabilities with an IEP. In general, the nondiscrimination principles of Section 504 and Title II would apply to report cards with or without such progress reports.

FERPA - The Department's Family Policy Compliance Office implements and enforces the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*. *FERPA* protects the privacy interests of parents and students with regard to education records, and generally prohibits a policy or practice of disclosing personally identifiable information from education records without consent unless it is subject to a specific exception.

Disclosures of personally identifiable student information, including disability status, are subject to the protections of *FERPA* and *IDEA*. Generally, these statutes require consent prior to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in education records unless a specific exception applies. See 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.30 - 99.31 of the *FERPA* regulations and 34 C.F.R. § 300.622 of the *IDEA* regulations. Both student report cards and student transcripts are considered "education records" under *FERPA* and *IDEA*.

While the primary focus of the following questions and answers are the requirements under Section 504 and Title II of the ADA, to the extent that IDEA applies, this law is briefly discussed as well.

REPORT CARDS

- 2. May a report card for a student with a disability identify special education or other related services or resources being provided for that student or otherwise indicate that the student has a disability? For instance, may the report card refer to an IEP or a plan providing for services under Section 504?**

Yes. Report cards are provided to parents to indicate their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, or curriculum. Consistent with this purpose, it would be permissible under Section 504 and Title II for a report card to indicate that a student is receiving special education or related services, as long as the report card informs parents about their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, or curriculum. For instance, a report card for a student with a disability may refer to an IEP or a plan for providing services under Section 504 in order to report on the student's progress on the specific goals in the IEP or plan developed under Section 504.

However, the mere designation that a student has an IEP or is receiving a related service, without any meaningful explanation of the student's progress, such as a grade or other evaluative standard established by an LEA and/or SEA, would be inconsistent with *IDEA*'s periodic reporting requirements, as well as with Section 504 and Title II. Under Section 504 and Title II, in general, the LEA must provide students with disabilities report cards that are as informative and effective as the report cards provided for students without disabilities. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)(1)(i)-(iv) and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(iv). Without more meaningful information, a report card that indicates only special education status provides the student with a disability with a benefit or service that is different from and not as informative and effective as the benefit or service that is provided through the report card for students without disabilities.

- 3. May a report card for a student with a disability distinguish between special education programs and services and general education curriculum classes through specific notations or the use of asterisks or other symbols?**

In general, yes. LEAs frequently distinguish between general education curriculum classes and other types of programs and classes, such as advanced placement, honors, or remedial classes. Making similar distinctions on report cards would be consistent with the general requirements of Section 504 and Title II that individuals with disabilities may not unnecessarily be treated differently than individuals without disabilities.

See 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)(1)(i)-(iv) and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(iv). Under Section 504 and Title II, in order to properly reflect the progress of a student with a disability in a modified or alternate education curriculum, an LEA may distinguish between special education programs and services provided under a modified or alternate education curriculum and regular education classes under the general education curriculum on the student's report card. For instance, where a student's IEP calls for a modified tenth grade literature curriculum to be provided through the special education program, it would be appropriate for the report card to indicate that the student's progress was measured based on the modified education curriculum. This distinction also may be achieved by using an asterisk or other symbol meant to reference the modified or alternate education curriculum as long as the statements on the report card, including the asterisks, symbols or other coding, provide an explanation of the student's progress that is as informative and effective as the explanation provided for students without disabilities.

4. May special notations, including asterisks or other symbols, appear on a report card for a student with a disability who received accommodations in general education curriculum classes?

Yes. Accommodations are generally understood to include aids or adjustments that are part of an IEP or plan developed under Section 504 and that enable the student with a disability to learn and demonstrate what the student knows. In general, accommodations do not affect course content or curriculum. Examples may include sign language interpreters in the classroom, the provision of materials in alternate formats, or extra time on tests. Accordingly, to the extent that the use of notations, asterisks, symbols, or other coding on a report card to indicate that a student with a disability received accommodations is part of the information given to parents about their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, curriculum, the IEP, or the plan under Section 504, it is permissible under Section 504 and Title II.

5. May a report card for a student with a disability simply refer to another document that more fully describes the student's progress?

Yes. Nothing in Section 504 or Title II requires that LEAs use any particular format or method to provide information to parents about their child's progress or level of achievement in specific classes, course content, curriculum, IEP, or plan under Section 504. As explained above, under Section 504 and Title II, the LEA must provide students with disabilities report cards that are as informative and effective as the report cards provided to students without disabilities. As noted above, there are also IDEA-specific provisions that require periodic reporting.

6. May report card grades for a student with a disability be based on grade level standards?

Yes. Assigning grades (i.e., achievement or “letter” grades) for a child with a disability based on the student’s grade level (i.e., year-in-school) standards would not be inconsistent with Section 504 or Title II. Generally, Section 504 and Title II would require that students with and without disabilities in the same regular education classes in the general education curriculum be graded using the same standards. That is, if an LEA assigns grades to nondisabled students participating in regular education classes using grade level standards to reflect progress in the general education curriculum, then the LEA would also use those standards to assign grades to students with disabilities in those same classes. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)(1)(i)-(iv) and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(iv). Nothing in Section 504 or Title II prohibits SEAs and LEAs from deciding how to establish standards to reflect the progress or level of achievement of students with disabilities who are taught using different course content or a modified or alternate education curriculum. To the extent that a student with a disability is not participating in regular education classes, but is receiving modified course content or is being taught under a modified or alternate curriculum, it would be up to the SEA and/or the LEA to determine the standards to be used to measure the student’s progress or level of achievement.

TRANSCRIPTS

7. May a transcript for a student with a disability indicate that the student has a disability, has been enrolled in a special education program, or has received special education or related services?

No. A student’s transcript generally is intended to inform postsecondary institutions or prospective employers of a student’s academic credentials and achievements. Information that a student has a disability, or has received special education or related services due to having a disability, does not constitute information about the student’s academic credentials and achievements. Under Section 504 and Title II, recipients and public entities may not provide different or separate aid, benefits, or services to individuals with disabilities, or to any class of individuals with disabilities, unless such action is necessary to provide those individuals with aid, benefits, or services that are as effective as those provided to others. See 34 C.F.R. § 104.4(b)(1)(i)-(iv) and 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(1)(i)-(iv). Notations that are used exclusively to identify a student as having a disability or identify education programs for students with disabilities unnecessarily provide these students with different educational benefits or services. Identifying programs as being only for students with disabilities also would be viewed as disclosure of disability status of enrollees and constitutes different treatment on the basis of disability. Therefore, it would be a violation of Section 504 and Title II for a student’s transcript to indicate that a student has received special education or a related service or that the student has a disability.

In addition, prohibiting such preadmission and preemployment disclosures is consistent with the Section 504 regulatory requirements that, in general, postsecondary institutions may not make preadmission inquiries as to whether an applicant for admission has a disability prior to admission, 34 C.F.R. § 104.42(b)(4), nor may employers conduct preemployment medical examinations or make preemployment inquiries as to whether an applicant for employment has a disability prior to an offer of employment, 34 C.F.R. § 104.14.

8. May a transcript for a student with a disability indicate, either through specific notations or the use of asterisks or other symbols, that the student took classes with a modified or alternate education curriculum?

In general, yes. While a transcript may not disclose that a student has a disability or has received special education or related services due to having a disability, a transcript may indicate that a student took classes with a modified or alternate education curriculum. This is consistent with the transcript's purpose of informing postsecondary institutions and prospective employers of a student's academic credentials and achievements. Transcript notations concerning enrollment in different classes, course content, or curriculum by students with disabilities would be consistent with similar transcript designations for classes such as advanced placement, honors, and basic and remedial instruction, which are provided for both students with and without disabilities, and thus would not violate Section 504 or Title II. This distinction may also be achieved by using an asterisk or other symbol meant to reference the modified or alternate education curriculum. These notations, asterisks, or other symbols indicating a modified or alternate education curriculum are permissible when they do not specifically disclose that a student has a disability, are not used for the purpose of identifying programs for students with disabilities, and are consistent with the purpose of a student transcript.

9. May special notations, including asterisks or other symbols, appear on a transcript for a student with a disability who received accommodations in general education curriculum classes?

In general, no. Because the use of accommodations generally does not reflect a student's academic credentials and achievement, but does identify the student as having a disability, it would be a violation of Section 504 and Title II for a student's transcript to indicate that the student received accommodations in any classes. For example, a notation indicating the use of Braille materials is not related to whether that student mastered all the tenth grade objectives for her literature class. The only purpose of such a notation is to identify that student as having a visual impairment. Because accommodations are generally understood to include aids and adjustments to enable a student with a disability to learn and demonstrate knowledge, this notation could identify the student as having a disability and therefore constitute different treatment on the basis of disability.

10. May a transcript for a student with a disability indicate that a student received a certificate of attendance or similar document rather than a regular diploma?

A transcript for a student with a disability may indicate receipt of a certificate of attendance or a similar document, rather than a regular diploma, under certain circumstances. These circumstances are where this does not disclose that a student has received special education or related services, does not otherwise specifically disclose that a student has a disability (for example, because certificates of attendance are available to both students with disabilities and students without disabilities), is not used for the purpose of identifying programs for students with disabilities, and is consistent with the purpose of a student transcript -- to inform postsecondary institutions and prospective employers of a student's academic credentials and achievements.



Lake Washington
School District

Special Services

16250 N.E. 74th Street
Redmond, WA 98052

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 97039
Redmond, WA 98073-9739

Office: (425) 936-1201 • Fax: (425) 936-1358

Dear Student and Parent/Guardian,

In an effort to maintain student confidentiality, we are making a change to the name of the school that will appear on your transcript. Our records show that you currently attend a Non-Public Agency School which we have traditionally coded as "Contractual School" on transcripts. We have changed our system so that the neighborhood school associated with your address will now appear on the top of your transcript. As a result, you can expect to begin receiving newsletters, robo calls and communication from your neighborhood school. These alerts cannot be turned off. You can choose to simply ignore and/or delete. We are hopeful, however, that this will allow you to maintain connection to neighborhood school in the event that you will return. It will also provide you with critical information such as district and state assessments, graduation requirements and school activities which you have a right to participate in.

If you have any further questions, contact your child's case manager or our office.

Respectfully,

Dr. Shannon Hitch
Director - Special Services
Lake Washington School District