

Juanita High School Mascot

Update: Review Process and Decision

Dr. Jon Holmen, Superintendent

July 13, 2020

Origination of the JHS Mascot

- **JHS opened in 1971 and selected the mascot “Rebel” in relation to their deviation from standard educational methodologies**

Recent Events Related to JHS Mascot

- **2016-17 school year:**
 - Concern was raised related to the JHS Mascot
- **September 2017**
 - Administrative Policy updated to reflect a school-based process for changing a school mascot
- **June 2018**
 - After school-based process, JHS students voted to maintain the current mascot.
- **June 2020**
 - Additional concerns were raised regarding the JHS mascot and the School Board requested the Superintendent review the situation and provide an update at the July 13 Board Meeting

Review Process

- **Student, parent, and administrator discussions**
- **Review of relevant research related to the topic**
- **Review of District Administrative Policy**
- **Review of School Board discussion related to Operational Expectation 10 update**

Admin Policy Update

Policy 6970:
Naming Schools and Mascots

- **Removal of the school-based process for mascot change**
- **Clarified categories for naming schools**
- **Added language to require school names and mascots to be in alignment with policy and values**
- **Added language clarifying the Superintendent has the right to remove a school name or mascot**

Specific Language Related to Policy 6970

- **Should the Superintendent determine that a facility name or mascot does not meet the requirements of this policy; he/she may immediately remove the name or mascot and require the school to go through the selection process in order to adopt a new school name or mascot.**
- **Policy Requirements:**
 - **Mascots shall be**
 - **(1) culturally and racially sensitive and appropriate and**
 - **(2) comply with the district's Human Dignity (4010) and Non-discrimination (5010) policies**

Rebel Mascot

- **JHS Mascot was put into place with good intentions. The originators of the mascot did not use the term “Rebel” to honor/glorify slavery or the cause of the Confederacy.**

Rebel Mascot

- The term Rebel has direct linkages to the Confederacy
- Research on the term shows the most common understanding of the term (mascot label) Rebel is tied to concepts such as:
 - The South – referencing the region that fought for slave-holding;
 - The Confederacy;
 - Stars and Bars or the Confederate Flag; and
 - The Lost Cause
- There are other Rebel mascot linkages but the primary connection with the term is to the Confederacy

Rebel Mascot at JHS

- **Unfortunate historical references or visualizations**
- **Required to explain meaning/intent to those who ask**
- **A shocking experience to new students**

Superintendent Decision

- I have determined that the Rebel Mascot does not meet the criteria set forth in Administrative Policy 6970.
- Therefore, I am immediately removing “Rebels” as the Juanita High School mascot.
- I will ask Dr. Matt Livingston, Director of Secondary Education, to work with Principal Kelly Clapp to start the process of change and identification of a new mascot.

Rationale for Decision

- **Regardless of intent, the term Rebel, and its definitions, do not align with our stated values as a district**
- **A mascot should act as a mechanism that unites a student body**
- **No student, staff member, parent, community member, or alumnus should need to explain the intent of the mascot**
- **All students have the right to a safe and inclusive school environment**

Next Chapter

JHS students, staff, parents, alumni, and community have the opportunity to write the next chapter of Juanita High School. Juanita has always been a place that welcomes unique individuals and helps them find a place. It is truly a special place.

I understand there are stakeholders that do not agree with this decision. I do not disparage them for their disagreement. The connection to school and those experiences help to create memories and meaningful human connections. A common identity, such as a mascot, can help define those memories and connections.

Regardless on your view of this decision, I hope everyone connected with Juanita can come together to take this next step forward. We all have a responsibility to our current and future students to make this next chapter great.