

Olentangy Schools Public Participation Comments for March 11, 2021

2/26/21 14:48:45

Ceylon Wise "Salon" Wise

4842 Normandy Dr. Galena, OH 43021

Good Evening School Board Members, Words matter. They shape our attitudes, direct our actions, and reveal our intentions. Words form perspectives of ourselves, members of our community, and the world around us. Words are so important that the Code of Conduct found in the Olentangy Handbook places boundaries on what words are and are not acceptable in our school buildings. The 4th code of conduct says this: "Students shall not use obscene, vulgar, profane or discriminatory language, make inappropriate gestures / actions or possess vulgar materials. Note: Discriminatory language is defined as verbal or written comments, jokes, and slurs that are derogatory towards an individual or group based on one or more of the following characteristics: race, color, national origin, ..." This code of conduct found in the high school handbook is important and ironic. It's important because it clearly states discriminatory language including slurs are not acceptable in our schools. It's ironic, because the Olentangy High School mascot name is in fact a racial slur. The school itself is in violation of its own code of conduct. While there are conflicting views in our community regarding whether or not Olentangy High should maintain use of the name Braves, there is no question that the term Braves is offensive to many in the Native American community. Here is an excerpt from the Native Circle website which is the oldest Native American educational website. "What is wrong with "Indian" Mascots and Team Names? The answer to this question is both complex and simple. The simple answer is that they are disrespectful and hurtful to First Nations people. Some of the names and antics seen at games are nothing less than racist ... So here we are, decades later, and names like 'Red**ns' and 'Braves' are still being used by sports teams and by public schools with no thought of how blatantly racist these terms are...Since the first use of so called "Indian" mascots over 80 years ago, real Indian people have publicly protested against them. Here, we continue that protest, and ask that finally, after so long, people of good heart will listen." Regardless of our opinions, the name associated with the Olentangy High School mascot is a racial slur. It is both offensive and demeaning to many Native Americans. That is just a fact. I along with many other Olentangy parents encourage you to change the mascot imagery and name at Olentangy High School because words matter. Thank you, Ceylon Wise of Parent Diversity Network

2/26/21 17:18:04

Kim Allenbach Kim All-en-bach

1590 Kearney Way Delaware, OH 43015

Dear Olentangy School Board Members, I am writing to you today regarding the district rebranding initiative. It has come to my attention that the intention is to retain Braves as the Olentangy High School mascot, to be used with updated imagery. This decision is misguided and does not address the original concern of removing offensive branding. I, along with many other Olentangy parents, disagree with this action. Repurposing the name Braves and using it to refer to those who exhibit bravery, or in any other way, is not a viable solution. When presented with Braves as a name of a mascot, the action of people being brave does not come to mind. Rather, the current mascot, which represents a racial slur that can be both demeaning and offensive to many Native Americans, does. If the intention of making changes is to repair damage and move to mascots that are not offensive, both the offensive mascot name and imagery should be changed. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

2/26/21 17:42:28

Ashley Wise

4842 Normandy Dr. Galena, OH 43021

Good Evening Board Members, Thank you so much for the time, energy and effort that you give to our district as you tend to the concerns and successes of our school district. One may wonder since we are all still in the middle of a pandemic and trying to navigate safe and effective ways for all students to learn, why a community member would be so concerned about the rebranding of a high school mascot. However, many tasks and decisions are still going forth and issues such as this will go along unnoticed and we'll find ourselves as a district repeating the offenses of long ago if we don't address them now even in the midst of a pandemic. As you can see, I feel along with other community members that it is very important to truly stop and take the time to speak up about this concerning issue before it's too late. I feel it is very important if you haven't already for the board members and community members as a whole to take the time to reflect on the perspectives that have been shared by myself and other allies over the last few board meetings regarding changing the offensive name of the Olentangy HS mascot "Braves" and not to be conflated with the terms brave or bravery. While our voices as parents and community members do matter, we realize what matters the most regarding this particular issue are the facts and the opinions of the Native American community. We have taken the time to reach out to the Native American community and received correspondence with similar sentiments regarding this issue which we have previously shared with you. Additional valuable resources are the Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio (NAICCO) and the Native Circle education website. I encourage you to take the time to view their statements regarding the issue of using First Nation Mascots and Team names at www.NativeCircle.com/Mascots and <https://www.naicco.com>. Words matter. Actions matter even more. And in keeping with our goal of One Olentangy, this decision matters. Thanks for your time, Ashley Wise

2/28/21 15:13:38

Dennis Bell Den-nis Bell

8122 Trail Lake Dr., Powell, OH 43065

Dear Olentangy board, and staff, Since I thanked the superintendent, staff, and board for being prudent months ago, I feel I should thank-you once again as circumstances change. I know no decision, plan or approach will be perfect or be implemented exactly as designed. I appreciate your measured and deliberate efforts to make the best possible decisions for all. I apologize for not being a louder voice or more demonstrative in my thoughts over the last year as that creates a skewed perception that only the loudest, sharpest, and most persistent voices have strong feelings on these matters. That perception is not accurate. For the record, prudence and thoughtfulness do not equate to fear. Demands and stomping feet do not equate to reason. As a parent, taxpayer, and constituent, I also share the need and desire for my children to receive the best education, under the safest possible circumstances at all times. They deserve our best, most concerted efforts on their behalf. That brings me to the plan for full-time attendance. These plans depend heavily on everyone involved maintaining safe practices and protocols as proscribed. The truth is following the masking, distancing, etc. protocols, has been spotty even under the hybrid model, have sometimes not been completely enforced, and will be even more important going forward. I understand this issue is fraught with conflicting priorities, opinions, and politics but it seems to be the Achilles heel in the plan. Please consider carefully what measures will be taken when your health and safety protocols erode, are not enforced, or are ignored. This may become

pivotal in getting the desired results or resorting to back-up measures. I pray things get better with time and reconsideration of this policy is not needed. This message was also emailed to members of the board and administration.

3/1/21 19:23:22

Kariena Turner car-ee-nuh

265 Tara Glen Dr. Delaware

Hello! My name is Kariena Turner and I am a parent in Olentangy. My kids attend CES and OBH. We have been here 14 years. I have been on a bit of a journey after a group of parents in our district made it clear that keeping the Braves name with our rebranding was not the best decision. Not sure how I felt, I set out to see if our current plans for OHS were the on the right track. I didn't approach this with an agenda, just a desire to know how Native Americans feel about the changes...was it going far enough? I reached out to 20 different Federally Recognized Tribes and received feedback from 3 as well as some comments from friends of friends. One person, Cherokee, said he didn't care about the name Braves, but that was not the sentiment in his community and we should probably change it. The remainder of the communication said its time to change. This feedback includes an email from the CHIEF of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe! The other email referenced here was from a community member of the Delaware Tribe. It's interesting that the two Tribes who are most closely related to our area are the ones that responded. A Sign?? I have sent the correspondence I have received to Julie Feasel, Krista Davis and Jackie Merkle, they have the full emails but here are a few parts from the respondents. The consensus is to change the name Braves. I also had the honor of speaking with Chief Wallace on the phone and her passion and love for her people was evident as well as her compassion that this will be hard for us, but it must be done. Excerpt from Chief Glenna Wallace of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe. the word Braves will always be associated with Native Americans. Firemen are brave, police are brave, essential workers are brave, medical personnel are brave, but the word Braves, like it or not, will always be associated with Native Americans.... Eliminating the imagery is the most expensive thing. If your school, your community has already made that commitment, then my advice is to eliminate the word Braves. Choose another logo, one that will not continue to suggest Native Americans even though that is what you intend. Don't just go half way. I thank you for your sensitivity, your desire to do the right thing. And I realize that what I say might not be to your liking, but I must be honest with you and again ask for you to think long term. This will be an ongoing issue whether you want it to be or not.

Respectfully, Glenna J. Wallace Excerpt from Curtis Zunigha, Director, Cultural Resources

Dept., Delaware Tribe of Indians You can nuance the name Braves and try to justify it with a dictionary or thesaurus logic, but Braves is still clearly associated with a Native American male, oftentimes a warrior. Not a knight, not an army soldier, not an athlete. So being real about this is the best way to confront resistance to change. I realize there will be a cost to the school district to rebrand the name, but that's the price to pay for doing the right thing. But it shouldn't stop there. There needs to be an information campaign as to why the change is appropriate. A lot of that will come from taking an honest look at the history of Ohio and its historic racism against the Delawares and other tribes like Shawnee, Wyandotte, Ottawa, and Pottowatomi. ***** Board members, its time to change. It won't be an easy sell for many but I believe our district parents are compassionate enough to make the changes needed. Let the Olentangy High School Community rename themselves. We have heard from the relatives of those who were forced off their Native land and sent walking 800 to Oklahoma. Let us show them that we hear them, and we respect them, and we want to honor them. Let's do this Olentangy!

3/7/21 7:30:45

Cara Randolph

Good Evening School Board Members, Words matter. They shape our attitudes, direct our actions, and reveal our intentions. Words form perspectives of ourselves, members of our community, and the world around us. Words are so important that the Code of Conduct found in the Olentangy Handbook places boundaries on what words are and are not acceptable in our school buildings. The 4th code of conduct says this: "Students shall not use obscene, vulgar, profane or discriminatory language, make inappropriate gestures / actions or possess vulgar materials. Note: Discriminatory language is defined as verbal or written comments, jokes, and slurs that are derogatory towards an individual or group based on one or more of the following characteristics: race, color, national origin, ..." This code of conduct found in the high school handbook is important and ironic. It's important because it clearly states discriminatory language including slurs are not acceptable in our schools. It's ironic, because the Olentangy High School mascot name is in fact a racial slur. The school itself is in violation of its own code of conduct. While there are conflicting views in our community regarding whether or not Olentangy High should maintain use of the name Braves, there is no question that the term Braves is offensive to many in the Native American community. Here is an excerpt from the Native Circle website which is the oldest Native American educational website. "What is wrong with "Indian" Mascots and Team Names? The answer to this question is both complex and simple. The simple answer is that they are disrespectful and hurtful to First Nations people. Some of the names and antics seen at games are nothing less than racist ... So here we are, decades later, and names like 'Red**ns' and 'Braves' are still being used by sports teams and by public schools with no thought of how blatantly racist these terms are...Since the first use of so called "Indian" mascots over 80 years ago, real Indian people have publicly protested against them. Here, we continue that protest, and ask that finally, after so long, people of good heart will listen." Regardless of our opinions, the name associated with the Olentangy High School mascot is a racial slur. It is both offensive and demeaning to many Native Americans. That is just a fact. I along with many other Olentangy parents encourage you to change the mascot imagery and name at Olentangy High School because words matter. Thank you.