

Haight Community Votes for Love

In an election held November 14, 70% of the Haight Elementary School community voted to change the school's name to "Love Elementary School."

The vote concluded a months-long process implemented by the Haight Renaming Committee to generate criteria for a new name, take name submissions, hold a primary election to narrow the list, and then vote between keeping the old name and adopting a new name.

The name change process was initiated a year ago, when community members learned that the school had been named after Henry Huntly Haight, a 19th century governor of California who espoused strongly racist views.



According to Administrative Regulation (AR) 7310, if a group of school community members presents a petition for a school name change with at least 100 signatures, the principal has to convene a School Renaming Committee. Haight Elementary parents/guardians, employees, and students generated such a petition last January, and former Principal Tracey Lewis convened the Haight Renaming Committee (HRC) in March, 2018.



The AR mandates that the committee survey the community about whether it wants to keep the old name or adopt a proposed new one. The HRC went considerably further than this minimum requirement. In the course of more than eight meetings, the committee chose criteria for a name (something that implies concepts of inclusion, diversity, equity, and a link to education) and decided to create as democratic a process as possible.

On September 10 the committee began soliciting name suggestions from the entire community. The process was open through October 12; the committee received nearly 400 submissions.

Out of those names, the committee chose four to put before the Haight community for a "primary vote" on November 6: Don Grant, Niel Tam, Ohlone, and Love. Voter guides were developed in different languages,



along with multi-language posters. Haight students voted in the cafeteria during their lunch, and



parent/guardians had the opportunity to vote before and after school. Staff also had a ballot box in the school's office.

"Love" was the clear winner of the primary. On November 14, Haight students, families, and staff voted between keeping "Haight" or choosing "Love." The last three 5th grade classes also had a chance to vote, as did close neighbors and businesses.

On November 30, representatives of the Alameda Chapter of the League of Women Voters counted the votes and found that the name "Love" led "Haight" by 471 to 203.

The next step is for the HRC to present the results to the superintendent. If he approves the new name, he will present it to the Board of Education. The Board then implements a 90-day public feedback period, after which it will vote whether or not to approve the new name.

The rationale for the "Love" name is best captured by the argument for "Love" provided in the primary election Voter's Guide:

Why should we name our school after the idea of Love? Because love is at the center of learning, and love should be built into our school in every way possible. School is a place where you can show love for yourself and your family, your teachers, and your students. Love of our school means love of teaching and learning, of reading, writing, playing, laughing, and fun. Naming our school for Love shows that everyone belongs here, that we can give love to those who are hurting and to those who believe other things than we do. At a school named Love we teach and learn love for our neighbors, love for our city, love for our country, and love for the Earth.