

FAQs about the Haight Renaming Process

Why are people talking about renaming the school? Haight Elementary School is named after Henry Huntly Haight, who was governor of California from 1867 to 1871. In December 2017, the public learned that Haight believed that not all people in California should be allowed to vote. He was especially opposed to allowing African-Americans, Native Americans, and Asians to vote, as, he said, this would "end in the degradation of the white race and the speedy destruction of government."

He also believed that allowing people from different parts of the world live together in America was a "contravention of natural laws."

How does the renaming process work?

In response to this information about Governor Haight, more than 100 parents signed a petition asking for a new name for the school. According to AUSD Board policy, when there is a petition to rename a school, the principal has to set up a renaming committee. Former principal Tracy Lewis convened the Haight Renaming Committee (HRC) in April 2018.

That same Board policy charges the committee with researching a new name and then surveying the school population on whether it approves of the new name or wants to maintain the current name.

What was the criteria for the new name?

AUSD school renaming policy allows schools to be named after people, geographic areas, or curricular concentrations, concepts, or approaches to education. The HRC identified additional criteria to evaluate new names in order to select someone that could represent "the antithesis of Henry Haight." These themes included: unity, diversity, inclusivity, community leadership, educational involvement, local connection and/or impact, and devotion to civil rights, social justice, and equity. Although district policy allows schools to be named after living or deceased individuals, the HRC opted to only include deceased individuals.

The HRC [called for](#) and accepted name suggestions from Sept. 10 through Oct. 12. Information about the submission process was shared on the AUSD website, in the *Alameda Journal*, via social media, and in a newsletter that goes to all families, employees, community subscribers, and media partners. Names were accepted through a submission box at Haight Elementary, via email, and via an online submission form.

How many names did the committee receive?

The committee received a total of 403 submissions, including 11 calling for no name change. Of those names, the committee eliminated:

- 126 names submitted on the night of September 18 that included anti-Black, anti-Semitic, and otherwise unacceptable references (committee members believe this was a coordinated effort through online message boards);
- 71 names of people who were deemed ineligible because the individuals are still alive;
- Frivolous names like “Schoolie McSchool Face” and “Unicorn School;”
- 50 names that had no local connection (such as Fred Korematsu, Harvey Milk, Sojourner Truth, and Mildred Loving)

The committee then applied the criteria of education involvement, local impact, and devotion to civil rights, social justice, and equity to the remaining candidates. Two individual finalists met the most criteria: Don Grant (a teacher and track coach at Encinal High School) and Nielsen Tam (a teacher, principal, and Board of Education member in AUSD).

The committee also chose students’ suggestion of “Ohlone” (the first peoples who lived in Alameda). After some debate, the HRC agreed that a student’s suggestion of “Love” could be considered eligible as a value, concept, or approach to education, because it represents love of self, family, community, and learning and fits in with AUSD’s “Everyone Belongs Here” motto.

The committee also received a number of name submissions of phenomenal women, including Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Dolores Huerta, Michelle Obama, and Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Many names suggested, however, were either still alive or had no local connection to Alameda.

How will the final name be selected?

On November 6, the committee will organize a "primary election" in which the students and staff can vote between the four names. On November 15, the committee will organize a "general election" in which students, staff, families, and neighbors can vote between the current name ("Haight") and the winner of the primary.

Who can vote in the "primary election" on Tuesday, November 6 and how will ballots be submitted?

Students, staff, and families who want to vote will choose one of the four options on the ballot and place it in a box (students will vote in the cafeteria at lunch; parents can vote before or after school or at LEAPS). After they vote, they'll get a stamp on their hand. If they were absent, they will be allowed to do a make-up vote in the office on November 7 or 8.

Who will be able to vote in the "general election" on Thursday, November 15? Haight students, parents of students, staff, and alumni who have graduated within the past two years, and business owners within a 3-block radius of the school, as well as neighbors who live along the perimeter of the school on the streets Lincoln, Chestnut, Santa Clara, and Willow, will have an opportunity to vote between the proposed new name and Haight.

How can parents and community members submit their ballot for the "general election"?

They can:

- a) mail the ballot to the school
- b) put it in a box at the school on Nov. 15 (details to come)

- c) Put it in a box at the PTA meeting on Nov. 14 in the multi-purpose room at Haight Elementary.

How will students make an educated choice about which name to vote for during the "primary"?

All students will receive a Voter's Guide with simple descriptions of each name, which they can take home and discuss with their families. Teachers will also receive a short video with age-appropriate descriptions of each candidate, which some may show to their classes. Teachers have also received a Cross-Curricular Activities Guide that they can use to educate their students about Henry Haight and the renaming process. All classroom activities are entirely voluntary for teachers.