

Greetings Canandaigua City School Community,

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to provide an update specific to our school name and symbol as we continue to learn more information for the New York State Department of Education (NYSED). The Board of Regents and Commissioner of Education did act on and approve their Regulation specific to public school usage of Indigenous Peoples names, symbols, and mascots in the State of New York on Tuesday, April 18, 2023. The Regulation can be found here:

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/423brca4.pdf>

As an overview, there were really only two changes of note from the original Draft Regulation. These two changes are as follows:

1. The Draft Regulation required school personnel to prohibit anyone from wearing apparel on school property displaying the former mascot, logo, symbol or name. However, the approved Regulation only prohibits staff and school officials from wearing such apparel. We would not have to monitor general community members from wearing said apparel on school grounds.
2. The approved Regulation clarifies that schools can have Indigenous Peoples imagery if it is used for educational purposes. In other words, in our Primary-Elementary School link foyer, there is an artistic depiction of the Creation Story which is taught to all of our Kindergarteners. This can remain and does not need to be removed.

Please read the full Regulation linked above to understand what the State Education Department is requiring public schools to do. Furthermore, the New York State Education Department is supposed to release an FAQ and guidance document which will more clearly outline all the steps we are required to take to be in compliance with this Regulation. So far, we have been given no timeline on the release of those documents. We will share them when they become available.

It is my understanding that no public school districts in the State of New York obtained tribal approval to retain their name/symbol. Therefore, we all must change. As shared in our March 31 communication, and clearly articulated in the linked Regulation above, even an iteration of what our name and symbol once was will be declined by the Commissioner based on our historical affiliation and appropriation with Indigenous Peoples imagery. In other words, us switching from 'Braves' to 'Brave' is unlikely to be approved. The statement below from the State Education Department was shared with 13WHAM and clearly further indicates even using a trace of a name that is no longer allowed to exist will not be approved by NYSED:

“The Department will develop guidance on the regulations with a broad range of stakeholders that will be shared with the field. The Department does not anticipate that any team names, logos, or mascots that contain vestiges of prohibited team names, logos or mascots will be considered acceptable.”

What we will endeavor to do next includes the following:

1. In the coming weeks, we will begin a series of surveys with the school community (staff, students, families, community members, and alumni). These surveys will be used to guide our work and our final determination for a school name, mascot, and symbol.
2. The Board of Education will, as required by the new Regulation, pass a resolution committing to changing our school name and symbol by the end of the 2024-2025 school year.
3. Our Stakeholder Committee will meet to review the Regulation, FAQ, and Guidance Document, when made available, to discuss and understand the contents. The Committee will also review and discuss all survey results and help interpret the results and determine our final course of action.

We will publicly share the survey results. Additionally, a timeline of our work on this issue is on our website: <https://www.canandaiguaschools.org/district/news/symbol-forum>.

Admittedly, a speedy decision and direction on this matter for our community is certainly desirable for many, including myself. We must remain thoughtful and thorough as we are quite literally making a decision that will help define our school community for generations. When we frame it in this manner, it is a unique and special opportunity. We, collectively, have an important job to do, together. I have confidence that we will rise to the occasion and conclude with something to be proud of.

Thank you for your time and interest. Please encourage those who live in our school community or who are alumni to engage in the forthcoming surveys and make their voices heard. We will continue to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of our students, alumni, and community. We have so much to be proud of, here in Canandaigua.

Be Well,

Jamie Farr
Superintendent
Canandaigua City School District