



TAMALPAIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Redwood, San Andreas, Sir Francis Drake, Tamalpais and Tamiscal High Schools

Community Hero and Beloved Teacher Recognized

*Tamalpais Union High School District Board of Trustees
Approves Recommendation to Change School Name*

May 11, 2021 – Concluding a nine month process of review and school community input, the Board of Trustees approved with a unanimous vote of support to change the name of Sir Francis Drake High School to Archie Williams High School. The vote was made at the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees on May 11th, which included 60 minutes of public comments on this item.

Following a long and often emotional process, the Board of Trustees was ultimately asked two questions: “Does the name proposed by the school comply with Board Policy?” and “Did the school follow Board Policy for studying and recommending a name change?” After discussion on these questions, the Board of Trustees approved the recommendation to rename the school Archie Williams High School was formally adopted.

Board Policy for a name change (7130) – The Board of Trustees shall use the following criteria in naming schools, individual buildings, or portions of buildings: In honor of individuals who have made outstanding contributions to students and to public education, OR in recognition of the geographic areas in which the school or building is located.

Procedures for Name Selection – Recommendations for naming schools, individual buildings, or portions of buildings shall be forwarded to the Superintendent from the appropriate site governance body after that body confers with appropriate student, faculty and community groups.

“Archie Williams is inarguably an individual who made tremendous contributions to our school, our community and to our nation. The Drake Leadership Committee (DLC) used a process that, while not perfect, did provide students, staff and our community the opportunity to be heard.” said Leslie Harlander, Board President.

Process/Procedures for Naming

The DLC serves as the school’s site council, and its main purpose is to advise and inform on issues facing the school community. In accordance with its bylaws, there must be 16 members including: principal or designee; six teachers at large, one classified member, five students; and four community/parents

members. Members are elected by their peers. The current DLC has 18 members, which includes additional classified and student members.

To study the name change, the DLC met 15 times, and all meetings were noticed, streamed online and open for public comment. Additionally, the group held four student and community listening sessions, which attracted hundreds of people and offered opportunities for those interested to share their points of view. The DLC began with 500 suggestions for a new name and moved through a process that removed some suggestions and identified more popular options.

“I am grateful to the DLC for their earnest efforts to be open, accessible and inclusive to the school community through this political process,” said Board President Leslie Harlander. “In addition to following Board Policy with fidelity, they brought forward a recommendation that recognizes a local hero, Mr. Archie Williams. He embodies the values that our students have identified as the measures of a wonderful school community.” (student identified values noted below)

A Local Hero, A Beloved Teacher

A revered educator, respected military officer, and a gold medalist in the storied 1936 Olympics held in Germany, Archie Williams was above all else a mentor to youth and warm and compassionate friend and colleague.

After returning from the Olympic Games, he completed a degree in mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley, then served as a flight instructor with the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. His service to our country and military continued as an Army weather officer until 1964, when he retired as a lieutenant colonel.

A second career in teaching came next for Archie Williams, when he joined the faculty at Drake High School, where he taught math and computing for 22 years. Recognized for his warmth and genuine interest in students’ well-being, Archie Williams was described by students as someone who created a safe, supporting and healthy educational environment. As one former student said, “he never gave up on a kid.”

“Archie Williams’ contributions and character align beautifully with the student body’s values,” said Liz Seabury, Principal. “We know that the Board is being asked whether or not our recommendation meets Board Policy for names and processes, but my hope was that in addition to receiving their support on these procedural points, that the Board would also see this recommendation as a true and just move toward a name that recognized community, equity, positivity and service to others. That’s what Archie Williams’ remarkable legacy says to us.”

We know that for some community members this represents a loss and we also know that many of those same people knew and admired Mr. Williams as a teacher and coach. We hope that his name is one that the community can unite behind.

Next Steps

The school now begins the process of raising funds to support signage changes, a new mascot and the logistical details that follow a name change.

Student Value Statements

Gathered from the entire student body to help guide the school's work and the name change evaluative process.

Respect

Kindness

Togetherness/Community

Inclusion

Equality

Empathy

Helping Others

Raising Up Voices

Health and Wellness

Positivity

Safe and Comfortable

Honest

Forgiveness

Equity

Welcoming

[Board Policy 7310](#)

[Archie Williams Obituary in the New York Times](#)

[Background information about Archie Williams](#)

[DLC Meeting Dates and Minutes](#)