

GROTON CENTRAL SCHOOL



November 2022

Late last week, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) ordered all school districts in the state to remove the “Indian” mascot and associated icons from the public school system. Specifically, the order states, “the court’s decision establishes that public school districts are prohibited from utilizing Native American mascots. Arguments that community members support the use of such imagery or that it is ‘respectful’ to Native Americans are no longer tenable.” The directive goes on to state that “should a district fail to affirmatively commit to replacing its Native American team name, logo, and/or imagery by the end of the 2022-23 school year, it may be in willful violation of the Dignity Act. The penalties for such a violation include the removal of school officers and the withholding of State Aid.”

The district has every intention of honoring the ruling made by NYSED. After speaking with TST BOCES District Superintendent Dr. Jeff Matteson, it is our understanding that the District has until June 2023 to “affirmatively commit to replacing... Native American team name, logo, and/or imagery.” What this means is that the Board of Education must adopt a plan for the timeline the district can commit to for selecting a new mascot and removing Indian-associated items from our furniture, buildings (i.e. gymnasium and cafeteria walls), scoreboards, and uniforms. *We do not have to have a new mascot identified at that time.*

We are extremely appreciative and understanding of the history that is tied to our team name and the passion our school community feels towards our present mascot. This decision doesn’t change any achievements and memories that have been made by both alumni and the present student body. It is our goal to heavily involve our student body in the process for selection of a new mascot, working through student leadership clubs to begin to organize the effort. We believe we can turn NYSED’s decision into an opportunity for our student body to learn about the process of community action and develop some different mascots for the school community to select from that best exemplify what it means to have #GrotonPride. Please be assured throughout the entire process that we will be keeping the community informed of progress being made as we begin to work through the process of identifying a new mascot for the Groton Central School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margo Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margo Martin
Superintendent