

## REAGAN RENAMING SUBMISSION: 9/21/18

### 1st Choice -- Reagan Early College High School

This was, by an incontestably large margin. At every stage of the process, a majority of people said they felt dropping the “John H.” from the official name of the school was the best way to remove the commendation given to its problematic namesake, while at the same time honoring what the name “Reagan” has meant to the school community, East Austin, and to the city at large since 1965.

Community members from every decade since Reagan opened provided impassioned testimony in support of the history and significance of the Reagan name in their experience and memories of high school. These included the elation associated with the championship-winning football program of the 60s and 70s; the emotional significance of attending the school as it integrated; the pride of generational continuity within families of being Reagan alumni; the numerous couples who met future spouses and started families after Reagan, including at least one child that was named after the school; and many, many others who spoke specifically of the Reagan community as a family, one that had weathered many ups and down, but still treasured the bonds that had been created over more than five decades.

If the largest part of the decision factors only the wishes of the school community, Reagan would still come out as a strong first place choice. However, other considerations are enumerated below.

1. This choice will mean the least disruption to the current school population. It reflects the long-established common practice of referring to the school by last name only in all but the most formal contexts. Changing the name completely away from Reagan will mean a huge upheaval in the day-to-day life of the school, as well as having logistical implications for years to come regarding the continuity of state accountability, community identification, and the recent successful efforts to rebuild, for lack of a better term, the Reagan “brand”. It should also be said that Reagan serves one of the most vulnerable school populations in Austin, and fairly or unfairly, can least afford to weather a disruption such as a name change.
2. A strong case can be made for the name using the guidelines established by the district renaming committee.
  - a. “Represents unique natural quality of school area.” Like all high schools, Reagan is a landmark in its community. People navigate by it, define the surrounding neighborhoods by it, and decide where to live because of it. At one point in its history, the shape of the Reagan attendance zone could be seen from airplanes because all of the porch lights had blue lightbulbs. More than any building for miles around 7104 Berkman, Reagan is the heart of this neighborhood.
  - b. “A place that has a reputation for being inclusive.” For most of its history, Reagan has successfully served a demographically diverse population. It is also a No Place for Hate campus, an initiative to ensure all students feel safe and valued and diversity education is included in the curriculum. As a community school, Reagan is intended to support families and recognizable for that as being a model community school in the state and currently working on vertical community school grant. Reagan as a community school is intended was to support those inside and outside of our walls to support those in need.
  - c. A topic of focus for Reagan is that we are and have been a community school for almost a decade. As a community school, Reagan is intended to support families and recognizable for that as being a model community school in the state and currently working on vertical community school grant. Reagan as a

community school is intended was to support those inside and outside of our walls to support those in need.

3. A significant portion of the testimonials given for other names, both in writing and in person before the committee, mentioned that the suggestions were made if and only if it was the case that "Reagan ECHS" was not an option.

4. The leaders of the booster clubs for the band and the football team said they were concerned about a drop in alumni financial support if the name is changed, based on what they had been told by their members.

5. Many alumni said they were actually unaware of the background of John H. Reagan while they were students. No alumni who contributed to the renaming process said they felt they had been actively harmed by the name while they were students, and had only become aware of the Confederate association due to the larger national and city-specific conversation. While not necessarily the most salient factor in weighing the rightness or wrongness of the name change, it does speak to the larger context that most members of the community associate with the name, even after the years-long discussion communities have been conducting regarding the moral implications of having any civic structures named for Confederate figures.

6. This option will also mean a not-insignificant cost savings for the district, and this factored very heavily with the committee. School leaders, in preparation for this very process, have been phasing out the use of the formal name in new signage, uniforms, and other durable goods needed for the school. While the cost to completely remove "John H." from all school usages will obviously have serious financial implications no matter what name is selected, this option will save an inordinate amount of funds by allowing many such goods to remain in service. At a time when the district is operating in a severe fiscal deficit and is cautious about the optimal use of every taxpayer dollar, the committee was very aware that the school board would be considering the larger impacts to the district as part of their stewardship duties even as they weighed the moral implications of any name change.

2nd Choice: Barack H. Obama Early College High School

Of all the suggestions made for a person, former President Obama was the only name to receive any sort of plurality consideration from the committee.

**Historically connected as the first African American President**

**Servant Leader from community activist to US President, served all**

**Respected for Integrity & Strong Principles first priority when coming to foreign relations was diplomacy and work with others to build stronger alliances**

3rd Choice: Northeast Early College High School

**Represents unique natural quality for that particular school - neutral name, not offensive, does not devalue any stakeholders. No concern of the name falling from grace or having a negative impact to others. Northeast Austin is diverse and our campus represents the area of town well. Unlikely that Austin will not build another school more north or east than Reagan, making it geographically accurate. Reagan is currently a landmark for the neighborhood, and that would still be the case were the name changed to Northeast Early College High School. The neighborhood could naturally rally around a name that geographically represented it.**