

CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD REPORT

To: Board of Trustees
From: Gila Jones, Trustee
Date: September 23, 2020
Board Item: **TRUSTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO
CONSIDER A NAME CHANGE FOR JUNIPERO SERRA HIGH SCHOOL**

HISTORY

The building at 31422 Camino Capistrano began life in 1921 as Capistrano Union High School, serving area students until 1964. The school then housed eighth and ninth grade students until Marco Forster Junior High opened in 1969, and it continued to be the overflow home for fifth and sixth graders after that. Eventually the campus was given its present name of Junipero Serra High School. In 2003 a private school, JSerra Catholic High School, opened just a mile from CUSD's Serra campus, resulting in confusion in the local community.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saint Junipero Serra is remembered as the founder of twenty-one Roman Catholic missions in California, the primary purpose of which was to bring Catholicism to the native people of California, and to provide a base from which Spanish power could be further expanded into the new world. But to the descendants of the groups of native people known as the Mission Indians, St. Serra and the institutions he led were brutal and patriarchal, and were responsible for the suppression of native culture.

CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS

The Board is being asked to consider re-naming Junipero Serra High School. Board Policy 7511, *Naming of Facility*, states that the Board shall form a naming committee, comprised of Board members, to bring forward a name recommendation to the full Board for approval. Although BP 7511, *Naming of Facility* is silent on the topic of community input in the school naming process, the Board could solicit community input by publicizing the renaming effort in traditional and social media, and/or by appointing a community task force.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to form a committee to consider re-naming Junipero Serra High School, however the committee will be directed to bring back the estimated cost to re-name the school.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Following discussion, the Board may vote to form a naming committee of two or three Board members, and give direction to staff to begin the re-naming process.

PREPARED BY: Gila Jones, Trustee

August 05, 2020

Attention: Board of Directors, Capistrano Unified School District

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Board Members the Native American Indian Education Program of CUSD, I am writing this letter to express our concerns about the school name of Serra High School.

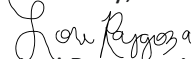
Father Serra was recently canonized as a saint by Pope Francis in a special mass in Washington, D.C. on September 23, 2015. Many Americans, mainly Native Americans, protested the canonization of Serra. The reasoning behind their protests aligns with the justification as to why the name of Serra High School, and all other schools named after him, is inappropriate and disregards the brutal reality of our history as Native Americans.

There are far too many articles on the internet with headlines reading "Why Pope Francis Should Not Canonize Junipero Serra." Canonizing Father Serra led to such a great deal of controversy leads to the conclusion that the canonization should have never been a consideration from the start. Yet, Father Serra's reputation and "good deeds" have already been so deeply rooted in California history to the extent that there is more than just one school named after Serra. History classes in the California school system have glorified Serra for decades. Often, our children have to replicate the missions with a shoe box as a school project and visit the Missions as required field trip. Our children must sit through history lectures learning about the terrible events inflicted upon our ancestry at a school that welcomes the horrid by its name.

On behalf of the the Board Members of the Native American Education Program of CUSD, we feel that Father Serra's actions towards "civilizing" the Native Americans of California did more to erase their culture than it did to save their souls. We are in favor changing the name of Serra High School.

Serra maintained a patriarchal or fatherly attitude towards the Native American population. He wrote, "that spiritual fathers should punish their sons, the Indians, with blows appears to be as old as the conquest of the Americas." The punishment was made clear to the natives "that [Serra and his missionaries] came here for the single purpose of doing [the natives] good and their eternal salvation." Serra had helped to erase and destroy Native American culture. My tribe, Mission Cahuilla, was no exception. My tribe name includes "Mission" because my ancestors, enslaved by Serra to work on the California Missions. Some call this cultural genocide. It's hard to deny that Serra was interested in assimilating natives into "civilization." And for native groups, and other contemporary progressives, it's cultural imperialism that doesn't deserve recognition.

Sincerely,



Lori Raygoza, Vice President, Board Member of Native American Education Program, CUSD