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## D233 board agrees to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day holiday

BY MARILYN THOMAS  
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The District 233 school board agreed to replace the Columbus Day holiday in October with Indigenous Peoples Day on the Homewood-Flossmoor High School calendar.

The board made the decision at the Feb. 15 school board meeting.

The topic was first discussed by the board's planning committee. Catherine Ross-Cook, H-F's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion coordinator, told the committee that approving Indigenous Peoples Day will be more than changing a holiday's name.

Board member Debbie Berman wondered how this one day will help students understand the many cultures and ethnic groups that are represented at H-F. She said focusing on Indigenous Peoples on the October date – a school holiday under state law – could leave many groups out.

"I would challenge us on whether it should be about Italians or Indigenous Peoples," Berman said. "I would like to ... really celebrate all the differences and all the wonderful people we have at the school because we don't have a day for every single one of them."

Ross-Cook agreed, saying she is working toward a "narrative of exploration, but also the intersection of cultures, the intersection of Indigenous

Peoples, intersection of Italian settlers, African tribes as well. That is allowing us to give voice to those that haven't had a voice."

She said, "The other tenet is inclusion. When we speak about inclusion essentially allowing the equal access and so we consider again these people who are still currently dispossessed and disenfranchised. Shifting the name allows us to be responsive to the socio-political context right now."

Ross-Cook said her efforts as DEI coordinator in presenting information to H-F "goes beyond racial and ethnic make-up, talking about diversity seen and unseen." She said it will include socio-cultural examinations that can also look at identity, sexual orientation, race, sex, economic status.

This school year, H-F developed Viking Compass, a class period that allows students time to interact on social/emotional and social/cultural issues, as well as academics. Through Compass, Ross-Cook said staff can "build students' cultural and critical consciousnesses understanding the dimensions of diversity, understanding who you are in your space, also recognizing the space we carry for each other."

"We speak of an inclusive environment, we're also talking about a relationship of all parties in the space" of H-F High – students, staff and community, Ross-Cook said.

## Hart volleyball team goes to state



Provided photo

The James Hart School eighth grade volleyball team made it to the Elite 8 in girls volleyball during Illinois Elementary Sports Association play winning in regional competition to advance to state finals. Although they lost to Taylorville School in the quarterfinals, they proudly represented Homewood and District 153.