

Student Learning Opportunities: Renaming Our School

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In the winter and spring of 2022, families were invited to engage in child-centered, developmentally appropriate, guided “Dinner Table Conversations” at home:

 Heath School Name: Dinner Conversation Starters

These conversations were mirrored in classrooms across the school during the same time period, with teachers leading students through these guided discussion questions.

On several occasions, every student in the school has been involved in a conversation about the history of the school name, our school’s values, and the decision to move forward with a renaming proposal so that our school name matches the values we espouse.

At every grade level, and as a matter of course, staff and students are engaged in learning opportunities designed to deepen our understandings about:

- Identity
- Names: why things have names, the naming process, why names are special, what names mean, and more
- Slavery and oppression in the United States
- Slavery and oppression in Brookline
- Race, racism, how to be anti-racist, and how to recognize our own personal biases
- School culture and building inclusive, safe communities
- History and historical implications

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These issues have all been discussed during many classes in relation to the school renaming process. The in-class conversations will continue as we move through the process.

Once we establish a list of finalists for a new name for the school, we will add historical research and biographies to the list of learning opportunities. A committee of students in grades 3-12 will play a major role in the process of determining a new school name.

We will also have hands-on learning opportunities related to voting, civic engagement, and decision-making around complex issues when it is time to launch the school-wide voting process.