

SAN MATEO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Randall Booker
DATE: January 19, 2023
RE: Request by Black Student Union to Fly the Pan African Flag

I. BACKGROUND

Per the District's Board Approved [Regulation 6115](#) - Ceremonies and Procedures - Flag Display Procedures - the Capuchino High School Black Student Union circulated a petition to request that the Board approve flying the Pan African Flag which signifies Black unity and the fight against injustice, on all campuses during February which is also Black History Month.

Their letter including supporting rationale, an image of the flag and signatures collected via a google doc and form are below:

To the Superintendent and Board of Trustees of the San Mateo Union High School District,

During Black History Month, we believe that the San Mateo Union High School District should fly the Pan-African flag, which signifies Black unity and the fight against injustice, on all campuses. Since the pride flag is flown during LGBTQ+ History Month, we ask that the same recognition be afforded to the Black students in the district, who continue to be underrepresented and marginalized in our schools. The Pan-African flag should be flown during February on all SMUHSD campuses to commemorate the historical sacrifices of Black people for the sake of Black liberation and equality, including equitable education. That being said, we do not live in a post-racial society. As an educational institution that is in [the transition of becoming an anti-racist district](#), raising the Pan-African flag would support anti-racism while also cultivating a sense of belonging and solidarity among Black SMUHSD students.

While our teachers are taught anti-racism, the Black Student Unions agree that students feel no tangible connection between the anti-racist training program of the district and the students. Since the beginning of last year, teachers were given anti-racist training and education as a form of professional development and encouraged to teach and disseminate lessons on anti-racism. However, if the district is intentional about anti-racist work, then anti-racism would not only be taught in the classrooms but directly

reflected in our school environments. As the celebration of Black history within the district is limited to emails, short announcements, and easily missed advertisements, the fact that there are no long-term and conspicuous commemorations of Black History Month is dismissive to the tireless struggle for justice Black people faced and continue to face across all American institutions.

Because Black students are such a small minority within SMUHSD student population, our unfamiliarity to staff and other student populations can breed contempt. Microaggressions and outright racist comments occur on SMUHSD campuses towards Black students, who have not only faced the challenges in our respective academic institutions and endured personal problems, but also the hate from our peers, staff, and surroundings. Having discussed our feelings of estrangement across all campuses as a small minority, Black students being openly recognized by our administrations and school environments would contribute to their comfortability and unity as proud SMUHSD students. In terms of the SMUHSD Equity Vision, this unity and robust approach to anti-racism would contribute to safer, more culturally inclusive school environments where everyone feels accepted and ready to learn.

To conclude, it is our belief that when Black people are supported in the district, as peers and co-workers, we are all allowed to thrive. Therefore, in celebration of Black History Month and in solidarity of the struggles of Black students and many others before them in the fight for liberation, we request that the San Mateo Unified High School District fly the Pan-African flag for the 2023 Black History Month.

Signed,

Capuchino High School BSU

[Signature Collection](#)



Black Liberation/Pan-African Flag

III. RECOMMENDATION: REVIEW AND ACTION

Staff recommend that the Board consider the Capuchino Black Student Union's request to fly the Pan African Flag during Black History Month (February) per Board approved Flag Display Procedures.