

Mascot Lesson Plan

Objective: To teach students in grades 4-12 why Okemos Public Schools is dropping “Chiefs” as its mascot.

Lesson Outcomes - Students will be able to:

1. Define “mascot.”
2. Identify two reasons why OPS is changing its mascot.
3. Describe how a new mascot will be chosen.

At a minimum, show the presentation to students.

- [Slides with voiceover](#)
- [Just the slides](#)

If you would like to extend the lesson, consider the following activities:

1. Before watching - Ask students to consider the following questions in writing, then discuss with a partner, and finally share with the whole group:
 - a. What is a mascot and what does it do for a school?
 - b. Why do you think we are getting rid of “Chiefs” as our mascot?
2. Show presentation.
3. After watching, discuss the following:
 - a. Why have the 12 Native American tribes of Michigan asked us to change our mascot?
 - b. What are the characteristics of a good mascot?
 - c. What ideas do you have for a new mascot? Why do you think it’s a good mascot for OPS?

Mascot Lesson Script

This is the voice-over for the presentation.

Slide	Narrative
1	<p>Video - intro to Slee and lesson</p> <p>Two things before we get started...</p> <p>First, Is it better to say Native American or Indigenous?</p> <p>The consensus is that whenever possible, Native people prefer to be called by their specific tribal name. In the United States, Native American has been widely used, and the terms American Indian or Indigenous American are preferred by many Native people.</p>

	<p>Second, what’s the difference between a mascot and a nickname?</p> <p>Technically, “Chiefs” is a nickname for Okemos Public Schools because we don’t have a person or thing that we can see to represent the name. During this presentation, we’ll talk mostly about mascots, but please know that this term will include nicknames, too.</p>
3	<p>Our school district is changing our mascot and nickname, so we want you to know why. We will also need your help to choose new ones.</p>
4	<p>In this presentation, we’ll answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What’s the big deal with mascots and nicknames? 2. Why are we changing our mascot and nickname? 3. What happens next?
5	<p>Having a mascot is important for Okemos Public Schools.</p>
6	<p>A mascot is a person or thing that is supposed to bring good luck or that is used to symbolize a particular event or organization.</p> <p>There is usually a nickname that goes along with a mascot, and we often use these two terms interchangeably.</p> <p>For example, “The mascot for Michigan State University is a Spartan, and his nickname is Sparty.” “People who attend MSU are sometimes called Spartans, and sometimes called Sparties.”</p> <p>Sometimes a mascot doesn’t have a nickname - the University of Michigan’s mascot is a wolverine, but it doesn’t have a nickname.</p>
7	<p>The benefits of having a mascot include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creates a sense of community - everyone in the district shares the same mascot. ● Provides a recognizable symbol of our schools. ● Helps increase awareness about our programs and students. ● Engages students, alumni, and staff to get involved -a mascot can help build school spirit.
8	<p>The reasons why we are making the change:</p> <p>The short answer is, “We want our actions to match our words.”</p> <p><i>We say we value diversity, equity, and inclusion, but that doesn’t show when our mascot and nickname are stereotypical of Native Americans and offensive to some of our families.</i></p>
9	<p>Let’s talk about the word “chief.”</p> <p>The 12 tribes of Michigan have told us that the term is offensive because it reinforces negative</p>

	<p>stereotypes of indigenous people.</p> <p>→ It is a form of discrimination against American Indian Nations, so therefore it doesn't honor Native Americans, the man Okemos, and our local history.</p> <p>Referring to Native Americans as chiefs, warriors, raiders, Indians, and braves doesn't represent them respectfully as a people. They are parents, children, spouses, doctors, grocery store clerks, teachers, maintenance workers, lawyers, artists, friends, religious leaders, police officers, students, soldiers, and so on. Native Americans are so much more than the one dimension we see in the characters that represent these mascots.</p>
10	Quote
11	Quote
12	The New York Times - "Confronting Racist Objects" (Dec. 9, 2016). Click here for the full article and video link.
13	<p>Michigan is home to these 12 federally-acknowledged Indian tribes that have a special status under federal law and treaties. The tribes are governments that exercise decision- and law-making power over their members and territory, and they provide many services to their members including lawmaking, tribal police and court systems, and health and education services.</p> <p>With almost 100,000 Native Americans living in Michigan, our state is one of 10 with the highest Indigenous populations. This means that we have Native Americans who live in our community.</p>
14	<p>Racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals have a negative impact on the social identity development and self-esteem of Native young people.</p> <p>The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), a national governing body of tribal nations, formally opposes the continued use of Native themed mascots due to these negative effects.</p> <p>Okemos Public Schools worked with several elected tribal leaders in Michigan during the mascot change process, and they unanimously support our decision to eliminate the Chiefs mascot and nickname.</p> <p>By continuing to use mascots that are discriminatory and insulting, we could be harming the mental health of some of our Native American students and their families.</p>
15	So...we need to choose a new mascot, and we need your help.
16 & 17	<p>The new mascot should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● support the mission, vision and values of the Okemos Public Schools; ● represent positive qualities around which all students can be proud of and rally around ● promote an inclusive atmosphere ● be representative of the Okemos experience ● work equally well for women's and men's activities (athletic and non-athletic); and

- have the potential to translate to a visual logo.

The proposed mascot will *not* include any themed references to Native Americans such as:

- Indians
- Reds
- Warriors
- Raiders
- Braves
- Chief/Chieftains
- Tomahawks

The proposed mascot should not be the same as the mascot of another school in the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC).

- DeWitt Panthers
- East Lansing Trojans
- Everett Vikings
- Grand Ledge Comets
- Holt Rams
- Waverly Warriors
- Eastern Quakers
- Haslett Vikings
- Mason Bulldogs
- Fowlerville Gladiators
- St Johns Redwings
- Williamston Hornets
- Charlotte Orioles
- Eaton Rapids Greyhounds
- Ionia Bulldogs
- Lansing Catholic Cougars
- Portland Raiders
- Sexton Big Reds

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The selection process will include:

SURVEYS - People in the community and in the district - including students in grades 4-12 - will have a chance to submit three ideas for the mascot.

STUDENT COMMITTEE - A student committee will be selected through an application process, and will include students in grades 9-12. They will narrow the ideas down to no more than 20 for further input.

DISTRICT COMMITTEE - This committee will include staff, students, and community members,

	<p>including a Native American representative. They will work with the Student Committee to make a final recommendation.</p> <p>BOARD RECOMMENDATION- Representatives from the District Committee will make a recommendation to the school board for approval. The mascot will not be officially chosen until the board votes.</p> <p>The board will vote on January 10, 2022.</p> <p>LOGO CREATION - After the school board votes to approve the mascot, a new process will begin to create its logo. Students will be asked to submit ideas.</p>
19	Thank you!

The survey can be found here: [Mascot - Initial Community Survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LWX38FT)

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LWX38FT>



Survey QR Code

Survey Window: **Wednesday, November 17 until Sunday, November 28th.**