



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Somerton Elementary School District #11 Governing Board votes to change new school name

SOMERTON, ARIZONA (March 4, 2022) — At a Special Governing Board meeting the Somerton School District Governing Board voted 3-2 to reverse their prior action to approve the community survey results on the selection of the new elementary school in Somerton, AZ.

On February 8, 2022, at the regular Governing Board meeting, the School Naming Committee chair, Mrs. Seh, Assistant Superintendent, presented to the Board the top five names the students, staff, and School Naming Committee had selected for the Governing Board to approve for the community to vote. The survey was released on February 9, 2022, through electronic format. Mrs. Seh and Dr. Noel, Superintendent explained to the Governing Board members who were present and the audience that this was the Board's opportunity to vote on the names and remove any names they did not want the community to vote on. The transparent process was clearly communicated by the school leadership with a clear understanding to remove any names before the survey was released to the public. After deliberations, Ms. Zendejas, Board Clerk, and the Governing Board members who were present unanimously agreed to "put all five names forward and give the community the opportunity to name the new school." Dr. Noel clarified that the vote would approve the name selected and the winning name is being approved by the Governing Board with their action.

After the results were reviewed, the School Naming Committee released the new school names to the district staff. The action taken by the Governing Board at their February 8th meeting approved the naming of the school's name based on the survey results. This action was taken to expedite the protocols required to start the necessary documentation with the Arizona Department of Education to ensure the school is ready to be opened for the 2022/2023 school year. The survey results favored the name Champion Valley Elementary School. Several community members and a few Board members did not agree with the name selection and called a Special Board meeting to discuss the outcome on March 3, 2022.

After listening to the community's call to the public the Governing Board members voted 3-2 to change the new school's name to Bravie T. Soto Elementary school in recognition of Sergeant Soto who was a Vietnam War veteran and member of the Cocopah Band of Native American Indians from Somerton, AZ. According to the survey results 75% of the votes did not select this name for the new school.

We thank all students, parents, and community members who participated in the survey naming the new school. Dr. Noel offered other ways to honor Veterans at each of the school sites, conduct an additional survey to ensure the community participated to honor the survey results based on the community participation. However, the Governing Board voted on the name change and the new school will be named Bravie T. Soto Elementary school opening August 2022.

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