

Ballot Results

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March 2021 TJ PTSA Survey - Mascot, Wellness, and Challenge Success

(1) Are you a parent/guardian, student, or faculty/staff?

Parent/Guardian - 169 or 82%
Student - 34 or 16%
Faculty/Staff - 4 or 2%

(2) Student - Should the mascot name be changed?

Yes - 15 or 45%
No - 10 or 30%
Abstain - 8 or 24%

(3) Student - New Mascot Name

TJ Tigers - 2 or 22%
Dragons - 1 or 11%
Phoenixes - 1 or 11%
Supernovas - 1 or 11%
Cardinal - 1 or 11%
tigers - 1 or 11%
Dragons; cardinals (bird); chromosomes; calculators - 1 or 11%
Cardinals - 1 or 11%

5 Abstains

(4) Student - Why not?

There is no logical reason why the mascot should be changed; it is absurd. - 1 or 14%

It seems like a waste of time, money, and effort to change the TJ mascot. I see no point in pursuing this shallow attempt at "change." Instead, the school should focus their efforts on both the mental health of their students and attacking the root of intrinsic biases. - 1 or 14%

The colonial is iconic and I don't believe there is anything offensive or wrong with it. Also a colonial is the only mascot that makes sense for a school called Thomas Jefferson - 1 or 14%

Many students already have TJ colonials sports gear and it would be extremely costly to replace all of it. - 1 or 14%

I feel like changing the name is only surface-level and very performative, and nothing else. If the mascot is changed, everything will have to be redesigned, and by extension the name of the school will have to be changed as well. - 1 or 14%

Colonial is part of TJ history. ("Goooooo Colonials"). Colonials themselves are not inherently racist nor should they be interpreted as such. Following the racism line of reasoning, Jefferson and Washington should be erased from history for owning slaves, which isn't logical. - 1 or 14%

Because it is important to the identity of the school - 1 or 14%

3 Abstains

(5) Student - Emotional Wellness & Support - On a scale from 1 (Negative) to 5 (Positive)

Emotional Wellness - - average rating = **3.55**, total rating = **103**, rated by 29 voters.

Support - - average rating = **3.33**, total rating = **80**, rated by 24 voters.

(6) Student - Emotional Wellness and Support Comments

I feel like my counselor doesn't really care about us - 1 or 20%

My counselor constantly checks on my class and is very open when I ask for help. She also directed me towards the school social worker and psychologist when I needed extra support and she organizes fun events for us to get to know each other. - 1 or 20%

Currently I feel that my emotional wellness is very positive, and my counselor regularly sends emails letting students know how to reach her and what wellness resources are available. - 1 or 20%

Although this question seems limited to the counseling department, I think it is important to mention that many members of the TJ faculty has been excellent in providing support to my child. My sons counselor has reached out many times and has made herself available. Her support during course selection has been excellent. She has calmed my sons anxieties, put things in perspective, and showed real concern for him as a whole person not just an academic client. Several of my sons teachers have taken time to discuss mental health. They have shared their own struggles during the pandemic and it not only made my son feel seen (many of the struggles were shared struggles), but created more of a connection during a very disconnected time. - 1 or 20%

They are doing what they can, and I respect that. My problems come from things that can't really be reasonably changed. I have received wonderful support from the TJHSST staff. - 1 or 20%

23 Abstains

(7) Student - Challenge Success Impact

None - 9 or 31% **TIE**

Positive - 9 or 31% **TIE**

I have no idea what Challenge Success is - 8 or 28%

Negative - 2 or 7%

Abstain - 1 or 3%

(8) Student - Challenge Success Comments

The idea that grades, an absolutely accurate method of judging a student's academic success, should be ignored with respect to overall educational merit is concerning. - 1 or 13%

Challenge Success reflects my own personal philosophy about what success is/should be. It doesn't seem like most of my peers feel the same way and Challenge Success does not affect my daily life or interactions, but it is nice to know that my own personal view (which seems somewhat rare) is supported by the school. I think Challenge Success has the potential to change the general attitude that I see at TJ daily, which is that success is defined by grades and college acceptance. I hear my peers discuss themselves in terms of their perceived success and it really upsets me to hear how many people refuse to be proud of themselves for what they have accomplished simply because they didn't get the test score they think they "should" have or because they have a B in a certain class. In the face of all of this, it is sometimes difficult to keep a positive attitude myself. I think Challenge Success is important because it is an institution that is taking the first step towards helping TJ students to believe that they are successful, that they are good enough, that other people are proud of them, and that they should be proud of themselves. - 1 or 13%

The teacher pledges from the challenge success committee were very pleasing to see, and in Junior year many of my teachers adopted new policies which really helped make school less stressful and more welcoming. For example, my math teacher started having a 5 minute break in the middle of each class, which helped me concentrate more and probably made me more successful in the class. My other teachers also implemented similar changes which I was very happy with. Overall I think the committee has done a very good job and will continue to help TJ students. - 1 or 13%

While I think the content SEL covers is important, I think it's incredibly repetitive and drawn out. SEL happens far too often, and I think some of the topics are very cliché. I think that the push for decreased homework is not helpful and is actually doing more harm than good. I think rather than trying to decrease workload and telling students to just not stress the Challenge Success Committee should be working on helping clubs stay afloat and recruit new members, informing parents about how they can best support their kids through TJ, and getting freshmen involved in the TJ community. - 1 or 13%

No measurable change aside from giving resources which few people read - 1 or 13%

I think I was already seeing some of the positive impacts of Challenge Success last year - several of my son's teachers spoke about trying revise some of the workload they were assigning to make sure the work was actually adding value and not just busy work. This year, it seems that many of the goals of Challenge Success have become part of the philosophy of the classroom. Homework volume has been

pared back dramatically to help kids have more balance away from their computer screens. I feel like teachers have been very receptive when approached with concerns over tests, projects, etc. I hope, with the help of Challenge Success, many of the new changes we have seen this year stay in place. - 1 or 13%

??? Is that the SEL? - 1 or 13%

I think my CS Class Experimental Foundations was formed because of challenge success and I never thought I'd enjoy CS but that class has made it fun. - 1 or 13%

19 Abstains

(9) Parent/Guardian - Should the mascot name be changed?

No - 96 or 57%

Yes - 45 or 27%

Abstain - 26 or 16%

(10) Parent/Guardian - New Mascot Name

Calculators - 2 or 7% **TIE**

Engineers - 2 or 7% **TIE**

Beaver - 1 or 3%

Cardinals - 1 or 3%

My student and I are not thrilled with the Colonial mascot, but we also don't think it is a priority. Whether you change it to Panthers or Pandas, if it costs a lot of time or money, then it's not worth it. - 1 or 3%

From Greek Mythology: Minotaur, a monster with the head of a bull and the body of a human; or Griffin, a creature that combines the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. - 1 or 3%

Rocket - 1 or 3%

Senators - 1 or 3%

Owl - 1 or 3%

Dragons; Chaos - 1 or 3%

Beavers (because they have a disproportionately large and beneficial impact to many species and the environment) - 1 or 3%

Eagles - 1 or 3%

Not sure but it should not be a person but represent a value important to education - Innovators comes to mind, Scientists perhaps, Thinkers - etc - 1 or 3%

mRNA - 1 or 3%

Creators - 1 or 3%

I'd like to know the choices the kids came up with - 1 or 3%

Something that starts with 'C' - Chargers? Comets? Cosmos? Cougars? Cardinals? - 1 or 3%

Explorers (scientists)? Cardinals (state bird)? - 1 or 3%

Pandas - 1 or 3%

The Rockets - 1 or 3%

Revolutionaries (like a revolutionary thinker) - 1 or 3%

Anything the students and alumni want as long as it's not racist, sexist, or otherwise offensive and preferably supports the intent of STEM school emphasis. - 1 or 3%

the atom smashers - 1 or 3%

STEMBunnies - 1 or 3%

Something not offensive, perhaps symbolizing the science and tech aspect of TJ. - 1 or 3%

WInnovator - 1 or 3%

Octopus Gus - 1 or 3%

13 Abstains

(11) Parent/Guardian - Why not?

There is a history tied to Colonial - positive history that reflects the mascot under which our kids and past TJ alumni have accomplished academically and athletically. - 1 or 2%

This would be a costly and wasteful action conforming to the prevailing cancel culture. The cancel culture undermines the fundamental values this country was founded upon. If TJ does not teach the students to have critical thinking and force them to follow whatever is prevalent in this society, whether it makes common sense or not, that would be very disappointing. Please STOP the damage and focus on

fulfilling your due responsibilities. - 1 or 2%

TJ is a proud Thomas Jefferson school. - 1 or 2%

Why change? The problem of equity gap is not caused by TJ naming it's mascot the colonial. The root cause is FCPS officials don't care about education quality of minority students. If their income is a function of students test scores, they will help the minority students with more relevant actions, not by changing name of a mascot. - 1 or 2%

TJHSST is still TJHSST. We don't change any more. - 1 or 2%

There is no need to change it and spend unnecessary money on changing everything afterwards related to this change. - 1 or 2%

don't see particular reasons to do this. Waste time, money - 1 or 2%

There is nothing wrong with the current one and it would be a waste of money better spent in other ways. - 1 or 2%

Time and money will be spent related to the Mascot change. Hope TJ will focus on doing something that really will help the students and the school. - 1 or 2%

Mascot is not important to me. The school should focus more important issues. - 1 or 2%

The limited school resources and tax payer money should not be wasted on this, instead energy and money should be spent on teachers, students, and improve the quality of education for students - 1 or 2%

My student says that the term colonial is a person who lived in colonies, but he does not interpret the name as a colonizer, which would have the negative connotation. At sports events we usually cheer, "Go TJ" so as parents we do not use the term, because it is not as easy to cheer. (No need to go to the expense to change the name.) - 1 or 2%

Please don't waste money on non-sense political agenda. The school need focus on how to improve education quality. - 1 or 2%

Nothing wrong with mascot. Current mascot has significance for alumni. - 1 or 2%

Colonials, in my mind, refer to the US army in the time of independence. I am sure, like all armies since the beginning of time to the end of time have committed atrocities one way or the other. Unless the argument is not to use any reference to military terms, I don't feel that the term Colonials is any worse than Settlers - 1 or 2%

We have many more important tasks to carry out during the COVID-19 pandemic than the mascot change - 1 or 2%

I don't see any need to make this change. - 1 or 2%

I don't think it's offensive personally, but do acknowledge that many colonists in Virginia took land from Native American Indians and that included loss of indigenous lives. - 1 or 2%

It is much better to spend our limited time and resources on meaningful topics such as how to improve the education quality and school admin support of our students. - 1 or 2%

It is a symbol, for people to recognize. Change will only cause confusion and waste. - 1 or 2%

It's a waste of time and money to change history. - 1 or 2%

We are in a pandemic, we should focus on effective distance learning and safe back to school efforts. I am against using political opinions to mess around within schools. Political topics should only appear as part of academics in an objective way in school, and shall not be used to dictate how school, students and teacher conduct business. - 1 or 2%

When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change. I have not seen a compelling case for the necessity of a change. - 1 or 2%

I'm not sure what's the reason it is being considered to change. I like the current mascot. - 1 or 2%

Not sure what benefit will bring to TJ students by changing the mascot name - 1 or 2%

The current mascot name is fine as it is. - 1 or 2%

There is no reasons to change TJ's Mascot. We need keep TJ's original Mascot! - 1 or 2%

I do not believe that the mascot is offensive. There is a push to change anything and everything that might possibly be the slightest bit offensive to even a single person and it is getting out of hand. Cancel culture has taken over and this needs to stop. They've already ruined the admissions process. Enough already. - 1 or 2%

Colonial just refers to the colonies and in and of itself has no racial connotations. There are/were colonies throughout the world that included various ethnicities. - 1 or 2%

I see nothing wrong with the name Colonial. Why are we spending so much time and effort to change the name of things. Just a ridiculous waste of time. - 1 or 2%

PTSA should spend time on constructive and useful activities for kids instead of revisionist culture. There is too much activism happening for the last year and while the concern by a few maybe valid, please focus time on educational activities and not indoctrination. - 1 or 2%

School should put on more focus on quality of education itself instead. There is a reason the Mascot was designed and used in the first place and it carries the legacy and school tradition. To me,

this type of question is equivalent to whether or not we should change American flag. If you think the answer is yes, then go ahead change the mascot! - 1 or 2%

Don't waste time and resources on such thing. Focus on the main goal. TJ is #1 because of the current admission policy not diversity or else. - 1 or 2%

School is named Thomas Jefferson- unless we are debating changing name why mascot - as a 1st generation American feel we are going overboard with the recent changes at TJ - 1 or 2%

I like current mascot. There is no need to change it - 1 or 2%

This is ridiculous. This is a generic representation of the history of this county. Please table this discussion until there are in-person PTSA meetings. The kids have been out of school for a year. This is a misplaced priority. - 1 or 2%

"Colonial" refers to a resident of the original 13 American colonies. There is not anything wrong with that. Stop with all the political correctness. - 1 or 2%

The "Colonial" is a reference to "colonial Virginia", which is not a pejorative phrase in any way. To cancel "Colonial" should rightfully lead us to get rid of the TJ name; after all, TJ was a "colonial." Both TJ and "Colonial" are historical references with no negative valence. - 1 or 2%

Because "Colonials" is descriptive of the people who founded our country. They were not perfect (in fact, they were human!) and they were a product of their times. Virginia was one of the first 13 British colonies - the people who lived here were called "colonials." If Virginia was not colonized by the British, it would have been colonized by the Spanish or French - with the same negative effects on the native population. Teaching the history and what happened to the native people is important. Being a "colonial" is not bad. - 1 or 2%

I think the colonial is a good mascot - 1 or 2%

A lot of families have invested a lot money on spirit wear that says Colonials. - 1 or 2%

The TJ mascot Colonial does not refer to the American history of colonist and slavery, rather it is a reference to the great American hero Jefferson after whom the school is named. If slavery is a concern, then we would have to erase over 100 years of American history, no matter what good came of it. History is history and we need to leave it at that. No matter what, we still honor our nations founding fathers and the mascot is a reference to our great 3rd president after whom the school is named. . Alternatively one can argue that if there is an issue with the mascot colonial, then there is also an issue with the school being named Thomas Jefferson. Nothing one does will satisfy the cynic and critic. - 1 or 2%

It has a long tie to the school and to our country and to our namesake. It is not offensive as it is merely a representation of that time period which existed and should be taught and not covered up for any reason. We are stronger when we deal in facts and when we address those facts, not bury them. - 1 or 2%

Colonial has been the TJ mascot for a long time. It should not be changed for the sake of political correctness. It is not a racially or ethnically derogatory word. Colonial is part of American history, whether you like it or not. - 1 or 2%

The current mascot represent the rich history and tradition of founding fathers who fought to set up this free nation. The school should be proud of having carrying this tradition of honoring rich culture of the state and represent the idea of pursuit to excellence through hardwork and integrity. - 1 or 2%

"Colonials" when used in the context of the United States refers to the 13 American Colonies and their residents - an entirely different meaning than "colonialism" and one that has lost those negative connotations. It contains, rather, connotations of pride in our country and patriotism. - 1 or 2%

Colonials has been the school mascot and there is nothing wrong with the name so it should not be changed. - 1 or 2%

I'm sad to say I believe this is overreach on the part of our principal, who seems to be encouraging this change. Despite the fact that Thomas Jefferson himself was far from a perfectly enlightened human being he was also an essential founding father and, importantly, a huge influence on theories of public education in our young country. Calling our mascot the "Colonial" is entirely benign and has no particular racial import. I don't appreciate the intention to tar our entire history with claims of racism, nativism, etc. We can and should celebrate the bravery and accomplishments of our colonial history and they do deserve celebrating. Colonists were fleeing persecution themselves and created a "grand experiment" in democracy that was bold in its day -- and remains bold (and fragile). Please don't take part in an attempt to shame ALL vestiges of America's past. There must be more nuance in this discussion of confronting America's flaws. - 1 or 2%

I dont feel that there is anything wrong with the current mascot. - 1 or 2%

The colonials father 23 colonies fought for the United stars of america - 1 or 2%

We don't need to spend extra money to change it. Use the money for other more meaningful things. - 1 or 2%

I don't think it is necessary to change the mascot and it could cost a lot of money to update. It

seems that money could be spent in other ways on students that would have more of a direct benefit. - 1 or 2%

Times have changed and Colonial for me today is more of bringing a diverse community together. - 1 or 2%

What is wrong with the Mascot? Why do we need to change it? - 1 or 2%

It is our history. There is nothing wrong, negative, or discriminatory about the word "colonial." It is a simple word that simply means of, relating to, or characteristic of a colony. The United States was created by colonies and the word should be celebrated rather than have it's meaning changed. - 1 or 2%

A quote by the director of public relations for GWU College Republicans describes her clearly why I do not believe the mascot should change: "The Colonial mascot embodies the spirit of freedom and ingenuity that marked the founding of the U.S. Changing the mascot allows historical revisionism to undermine the values on which our [school] was founded." There is unity and history behind the Colonial nickname. The Fairfax County School Board needs to stop wasting everyone's time, energy, and taxpayer dollars on these ridiculous and burdensome proposed changes and do their job by actually focusing on our students' education. - 1 or 2%

"Colonial" mascot is not "received as extremely offensive" by very many people at all. Probably 99.2 percent of people who encounter the mascot don't think twice about it. It is just a Logo. - 1 or 2%

I don't think it is necessary to change. I think if you choose to change it, it is really waste time and money for something that is not necessary to change. - 1 or 2%

I did not see anything wrong with current mascot. - 1 or 2%

I don't see any need to to change it, ... not w/o knowing what the proposed new mascot names are. Colonial seems historically appropriate for a Virginia school. - 1 or 2%

As nouns the difference between colonial and colonist is that colonial is a person from a country that is or was controlled by another while colonist is a person who is a founder of a colony. Adjective - Of or pertaining to a colony. - Of or pertaining to a period when a country or territory was a colony. - (US) Of or relating to the original Thirteen Colonies of the USA. The name Colonials refers to a very beginning of our country's history. Without that part of the history, our country wouldn't be existing. - 1 or 2%

Americans do not think of colonials as oppressors. They endured and survived then fought and won independence. They created this great nation. I can't confuse working to build a great nation as being on the wrong side of history or deserving of being cast as a negative connotation. Misguided people confuse the Colonials with colonialism, maybe that's a product of poor public education. It is easy for some brainwashed people to behave like the Nazis with their book burning or the Taliban with their destruction of history. Stop ruining things for some fake feeling of achievement. - 1 or 2%

I'm not aware of the discussions about changing the mascot. I always thought a "colonial" is a generic term that refers to any person who lived in the American colonies in pre-, during-, and post-Revolutionary times. I assumed the school chose "Colonials" to align with the era in which Thomas Jefferson lived, to have a connection of the mascot to TJ. Perhaps there are racist, anti-Native American, sexist, or other negative connotations of "colonial"? Maybe someone who takes over someone else's territory is the negative connotation. If the term is offensive to people, then I do think the mascot name should be changed. I've always thought "Colonials" is an odd name for a high school. Typical HS mascots are animals, birds, natural forces (tornados, hurricanes, sparks, thunder, etc.). How about the TJ "TI-85's ...just kidding with that one! - 1 or 2%

I believe in the importance of tradition and the current mascot name harkens back to TJ's and this country's history. Additionally, I believe the cost associated with changing the mascot name is a waste of valuable funds and time that could be used elsewhere. - 1 or 2%

There is no need to change the name. Teach the students the pros and cons about Colonials and move on. Stop renaming things. It doesn't solve people's problems. Educate and move forward. The change is also a waste of tax payer funds. - 1 or 2%

Why should it be? A change needs to be justified, not running things as they are. There was only a question in this survey without any background, who proposed the change, what are the justifications cited, whether entire gamut of views represented impartially, and associated costs of this change. This survey should not ask a question and then ask to explain why there should not be a change from the participants. - 1 or 2%

28 Abstains

(12) Parent/Guardian - Emotional Wellness & Support - On a scale from 1 (Negative) to 5 (Positive)

Emotional Wellness - - average rating = **3.66**, total rating = **538**, rated by 147 voters.

Support - - average rating = **3.50**, total rating = **343**, rated by 98 voters.

(13) Parent/Guardian - Emotional Wellness and Support Comments

NA - 2 or 3%

The kid are hoping to get more school in person. They're happy they'll get 2 days but they'd love more. - 1 or 1%

None so far.wish the school would organize small groups - 1 or 1%

My child is well engaged in educational and extracurricular activities. - 1 or 1%

I think focus should be spent on getting the kids back in school together since I think it will help their emotional wellness. - 1 or 1%

School does really well when it comes to emotional wellness of students, in my opinion. - 1 or 1%

My son is now in-person and this is helping alot with his emotional well-being. Ms. Hamblin is also very supportive. - 1 or 1%

The student is doing so far so good. - 1 or 1%

My son desperately needs to be in school 4 days a week. I've made this request numerous times and stressed the importance of his mental health as the reason. The response I received was to find him a therapist. Thanks. I'm doing that, but what I need is permission for him to attend school 4 days a week immediately. - 1 or 1%

I have 2 students at TJ. One counselor is very pro-active and responsive. My other child's counselor has had very little interaction with my child all year. - 1 or 1%

We don't have much of this problem and haven't contacted school for this. - 1 or 1%

I believe the effects of covid, specifically the isolation, have had a somewhat negative impact on my child. I hope the physical return to school, even though it is only 2 days a week, will help to improve the situation. From the interaction my student has had with their counselor, it has been a positive and helpful experience. - 1 or 1%

I am not aware of any support that my student is getting from her Counselor, other than course selection which isn't "support," it's just a logistical thing. Support about the upcoming AP and PSAT10 exams would be great. I've not seen *anything* for the 10th graders with support/resources/etc for the upcoming AP and PSAT10 exams. - 1 or 1%

The counseling department seems supportive, helpful, and trying hard...my child is however mostly getting wellness support outside of the TJ setting - 1 or 1%

Mr. Burke has been extraordinarily helpful, kind and responsive. - 1 or 1%

It is the the parents' responsibility and privilege to take care of the children's physical and emotional well-being, not the schools. FCPS has way too many counselors, social workers, psychologists. It's starting to resemble an asylum rather than an educational system. With academic excellence and record taking a backseat to mental issues, no wonder FCPS going down the drain. I find these constant emails and questions about emotional and mental well-being very intrusive and offensive. - 1 or 1%

When I contact Mr. Burke, he readily and enthusiastically assists me and my son. I appreciate that when I contact him, he responds the same day. He also has a very positive attitude. I also appreciate Mr. Kostka who has discussed issues I had. - 1 or 1%

Not applicable - 1 or 1%

From the moment we went on home based school my child's counselor has reached out very regularly to parents reminding them he is available for any help we need. Mr. Burke is absolutely phenomenal. - 1 or 1%

I am surprised/disappointed that there has not been more outreach/encouragement to my child from counselors. Teachers have been amazing, for the most part. - 1 or 1%

I don't think the counsellor has done anything other than meet when paperwork required it for my student, but, I would expect them to be quite busy with those that need it. Brandon has reached out a few times and did a bang up job at getting cheerful prompt answers. - 1 or 1%

My student's counselor is excellent. - 1 or 1%

My child has not needed services - 1 or 1%

Our counselor conveys messages from some teachers about missing assignments, and listen to our feedback. That's it. We haven't seen any support provided to our kid. We only receive teachers' concerns, but our concerns are not seem to be addressed. Our kid is left with expectations and is being pushed to deliver more on their own. - 1 or 1%

Ns - 1 or 1%

The faculty and staff at TJ all seem earnest and eager in their support of the students. We have not had a need to consult with the counseling department on emotional wellness and support, but I have no doubt that they would do their best to provide support. - 1 or 1%

My child received some counseling in freshman year. She did not require any counseling since then. - 1 or 1%

Our family is doing great. Ms Ketchem has done an exceptional work. She is very attentive and

responsive. She provides resources and people as needed. The department has been very supportive over the years and this year has gone above and beyond. - 1 or 1%

While teachers are working very hard to help students in the past year, FCPS and TJ admin teams have focused too much on TJ reform and other reforms for political reasons without regard to the well-being of students, and help needed by parents. - 1 or 1%

Efforts of the TJ Counseling Department are largely out of view. Not sure what efforts are being made to be in contact with my child or how my child is responding - typical of a teenager to avoid telling parents what is going on. It's one thing to get information on how specific classes are going, but quite another to gain insight if there are outreach efforts made by TJ Counseling to discuss emotional wellness. - 1 or 1%

My child went through severe depression that started during the virtual time of the pandemic. The TJ staff was very supportive, especially Mr. Burke. It's also great to have a social worker and psychologist on staff, they have provided support as well. - 1 or 1%

Overall things are good. However, I would like to see more partnering of freshman with upper classmen in a mentoring type role. IE helping freshman better understand the upper level classes from a student's perspective. This would also be VERY valuable with sports. I have a freshman participating in sports and the process has been quite confusing even though we have attended all zoom information meetings together. As a freshman my child is very reluctant to ask questions or get clarification from the coach directly or in a group setting. - 1 or 1%

My child is generally emotionally well and feeling positive. If she needed help, her interactions with the counseling department and her counselor has been good. - 1 or 1%

My emotional wellness was negatively affected by the principal's unusual involvement in promoting certain political agenda this past summer and fall. It's hard to imagine the principal of the US #1 high school communicated with such racism and stigma, yet she was the one who called for countering racism and stigma. To make matters worse, she did that to both students and parents of our community. Students are innocent and should not be harassed by political fights. She should have focused on improving the education quality and admin support to the students! My child was very confused by the principal's actions. We had to spend significant time to help our child to go through this difficult time. - 1 or 1%

Getting back in school will help tremendously - - 1 or 1%

I think it would be helpful to get a regular emotional counseling sessions to check in on my child's experiences as he navigates high school with academics and peer interactions. - 1 or 1%

Currently not receiving any assistance from the TJ counseling department. - 1 or 1%

The counselor is great. Some of the teachers could/should receive some training regarding working with adolescents with mental health issues especially because we are in the middle of a mental health crises and the stakes could not be higher. - 1 or 1%

My child is receiving more than enough friends at school and great support from their counselor - my child's one complaint is that it is difficult to make strong friendships over Zoom and they are forward to next school year where perhaps things will all be in person and it will be much easier to make friends. - 1 or 1%

The biggest boost to my child's emotional wellness came from being allowed back in school. If it was 5 days week it would be great - 1 or 1%

To improve emotional wellness students need to return to school full time in person with full time in person teachers - 1 or 1%

The support seems appropriate. - 1 or 1%

Counselors are overloaded and unable to respond to emails related to course planning - 1 or 1%

Virtual does not work; it is difficult for students to fully understand what is expected of them - 1 or 1%

The best impact of Emotional Wellness would be to get the kids back in school full time. - 1 or 1%

I feel like when you can connect with them they are helpful. They may need more resources as much is being asked of them. - 1 or 1%

Though labor intensive, it might be wise to have parents and counselors have a mandatory check in. - 1 or 1%

My child is just generally frustrated with the situation. There is not much that a counselor could do to fix the situation. They could agree that it is a valid feeling but until the situation gets better, my student will be frustrated. Justifiably. - 1 or 1%

Please reopen in person teaching for all students. - 1 or 1%

Our student has a great counselor who is very responsive and caring, and I know others in student services are available for our student if he needs help or someone to talk to. Appreciate the counselor emails that are sent to all her students and parents, with proactive emotional wellness messages and helpful info to reduce stress around the college process. The Google Classrooms with counselors and

Social Emotional Learning lessons have been big strengths of pandemic school. - 1 or 1%

The back to school "town hall" resulted in anxiety for our family - Dr. Bonitatibus' posture of inflexibility about the ability to transition from in-person to virtual school if a student feels unsafe or if the time spent does not feel productive was extremely worrisome. I would be surprised if a bunch of students who would otherwise have tried in-person decided to switch to virtual because of the posture that future changes would not be accepted. What a shame. We received very helpful and grounded advice from our student's counselor. - 1 or 1%

My child is doing alright mainly because she's quite involved with school activities and constantly has online meetings with friends. But I've heard many students do feel lonely and emotionally stressed. - 1 or 1%

I think the my kids' TJ teachers and counselors have been doing a phenomenal job. It's just really trying times. Thank you. - 1 or 1%

I believe that the school administration and staff are doing their best to support our students' educational and emotional needs. I appreciate all their efforts in the current circumstances. - 1 or 1%

Can you possibly set up some tasks requiring the students to exercise each day? - 1 or 1%

I don't feel that my child has had a huge need for an emotional support, but Mr. Burke has been great regardless. - 1 or 1%

I believe that there is a trend, both with FCPS and TJ leadership, to assume that a large number of our students have mental health issues. As a physician and as a parent, I disagree. While resiliency can (and should) be taught, the current SEL program does not appear to be very helpful. - 1 or 1%

My child has a positive outlook on school and life in general. As a virtual freshman, he does worry, however, about being able to tour the school prior to becoming a sophomore, so that he doesn't feel like a freshman during his sophomore year. His counselor is very easy to reach and responsive. - 1 or 1%

My child and I have been very unhappy with the counselor. She is cold and robotic and seems to have no empathy or consideration for this age group. I know this is not the norm with counselors at TJ and feel that we drew "the short straw" but given the fact that the counselor will be writing the college rec we are worried that bringing these issue to light will result in backlash. It is an unfortunate situation and I will be vocal about our experience after my child graduates. - 1 or 1%

Have not needed to use any counseling service. Just keep us informed with update on wellness news and practices. - 1 or 1%

I realize your counselors are well-meaning, but they don't know our kids well enough to provide real emotional counseling. Their attempts to send generic messages are received with contempt by many kids, since they are impersonal and not what's needed. All kids want to be known as more than a number, and the lack of personal contact from those who ought to be making more of an effort is glaring -- to them as well as to their parents. - 1 or 1%

The whole system is ignoring kids' emotional needs during f a pandemic. Why have there been no outdoor activities except sports? Why is in person school all or nothing? Why are they trying to di school the same way... with classes that switch and lunch everyday rather than restructuring for safety and just having cohorts stay together for 3 periods per day, every day? We lack creative thinking g that will keep kids safe - it's all or nothing, which means my kids suffers because he doesn't feel safe to return but he doesn't get any human contact as a result. - 1 or 1%

It's up to my child to contact the counselor, but I feel the counselor should be more outgoing about checking in with the students, esp those staying home as others return to school. - 1 or 1%

There is excitement about getting back to school and seeing teachers and students. Our kids have been very lonely without being able to see their friends. - 1 or 1%

I have no idea if this is just a trend among few of the TJ kids but I have noticed an unusual addictive viewing of Japanese anime with our child. I have no idea what kind of messages are being promoted in these shows but they have truly created a distraction in our child's life - 1 or 1%

SEL could be shortened - my student misses the 8th period classes that SEL conflicts with. - 1 or 1%

Our son has a great counselor Sean Burke who always goes above and beyond in following up with him. We are completely satisfied with the emotional wellness our son has and the support he has received from Sean. - 1 or 1%

TJ has really impressed me with their focus on student well-being. The counselors are much more engaged and attentive than I've experienced at my other kids' FCPS high school. The Wellness Committee is amazingly active for something run by parents, and really complements the faculty and counseling efforts well. - 1 or 1%

Our child hasn't had any need to reach out to the counselors. - 1 or 1%

We have always received a quick response from Ms. Phelps! - 1 or 1%

77 Abstains

(14) Parent/Guardian - Challenge Success Impact

None - 54 or 34%

I have no idea what Challenge Success is - 45 or 28%

Positive - 44 or 27%

Negative - 7 or 4%

Abstain - 11 or 7%

(15) Parent/Guardian - Challenge Success Comments

I've seen some good changes just in our family with some of the CS resources like the college fit presentation. I've seen some teachers make good changes. I think it's a good thing. I think at some point there needs to be more pressure from the admin for more teachers to embrace and act on it. A voluntary culture change is great, but if we never get there, we've missed out. - 1 or 2%

Challenge success has been very helpful for one of my TJ kids. For my child who takes everything very seriously, challenge success has taken the edge off of their stress level. Challenge success has been harmful to my other TJ kid. For my more laid back student, challenge success has reinforced that they don't need to take things seriously and that getting poor grades is fine. With today's extremely competitive college application process I think this child will be very disheartened by college rejections due to lower grades that the challenge success approach has encouraged them not to focus on. - 1 or 2%

It's a real shame that academic rigor at supposedly the number one public high school in the country is being watered down. Children should be challenged in a healthy manner, not given a way out. This will remove any distinction between TJ and a regular public high school. - 1 or 2%

I've heard of the name, but that's it. I think I've received communications about it, so it's probably my fault that I haven't taken the time to read and don't know more. I'll look into it! - 1 or 2%

I know what Challenge Success is, but I don't know what the focus topics/areas are of Challenge Success. So, I have no idea if it impacted my student + or -. - 1 or 2%

My student grows up with a good balance of work and life and always puts sleeping and free time on top of his priority, I don't know how this program has any impact on him or if he knows about this program. - 1 or 2%

I hope the committee would craft more simple down to earth messages for these teenagers. I have heard from my child that yes there are mental health issues at TJ, and no they do not feel challenge success helps on these issues. I guess there is a gap to fill how your efforts are being considered as solid measures to help these young people. - 1 or 2%

I don't use it extensively, but I know it helped some other students. - 1 or 2%

TJ is #1 because of the past & current students admitted via the existing merit-based admission policy. History & fact has proved it successful. If the TJ president/admin doesn't like this, she should quit this position ASAP instead of destroying it. - 1 or 2%

My child has a huge amount of work and still gets too little sleep. It sounds like "Challenge Success" is a failure so far. The expectation is to have a lot of work since there is much to learn so I don't know the real purpose of this. I hope the plan is not to water down the TJ experience. Most TJ teachers seem to understand the load and are flexible enough to help the students when needed. - 1 or 2%

Both my sons have expressed the importance of sleep (with facts), without my input. (I tend to need little sleep.) - 1 or 2%

Please don't mix the political debate into Challenge Success mission. Please use the existing fund with real work to help URM students in academics and EC activities and don't waste money on facial uplift work, e.g. changing mascot or changing school name. - 1 or 2%

No idea if it makes any difference as I don't know any other program. - 1 or 2%

The program is CRITICAL to the school moving forward. The program is in its infancy really and will take years to implement as a culture. The path that Challenge Success sets TJ on is one that is important to making the school more inclusive to all races/creeds/genders/abilities and creating a positive and supportive school. Continue this important work. People at TJ love to measure things of course but many things that are important cannot be measured easily or conveniently. Challenge Success is one of those programs. - 1 or 2%

I think it is a good program and committee. - 1 or 2%

I heard a lot that student is not defined by GPA. But also heard a lot that how important GPA is for college admissions. I am confused. - 1 or 2%

Still a lot of homework, especially Spanish class. - 1 or 2%

I need to learn more about Challenge Success. I have been distracted too much by the pandemic

and the endless reckless reforms by FCPS. - 1 or 2%

TJ's Challenge Success program does not stand out in any meaningful way (that may be due to the COVID model of distance learning) with respect to my child's experience with school. It may be integrated into day-to-day activities and classroom studies, but as a parent of a freshman it's lost in the noise of everything else my child is experiencing. How is a parent to know if the Challenge Success program is being implemented; or if a specific experience within TJ is based on the implementation of the Challenge Success program? - 1 or 2%

I honestly don't know what Challenge Success has done and not sure what difference it has made. My student doesn't know either. So I don't think it has had any effect on my student. - 1 or 2%

I am not sure the Challenge Success program has had an actual impact on my child, though there does appear to have been some lightening of the homework burden. That said, the very fact that this program has been undertaken and made the issues of emotional well-being and balance a topic of discussion has been useful and helpful. Awareness of the potential problems in this area is a critical, good step. - 1 or 2%

I don't think I have heard about this program. Introduce better. - 1 or 2%

Recent change TJ Admission is to destroy TJ's future. If recent change success then TJ is no longer called "TJ" - 1 or 2%

Fortunately my child has been doing well with virtual learning - 1 or 2%

It is a survey, paperwork and trip driven initiative that has not translated into to something meaningful that positively impacts the daily life of TJHSST students. It seems more like in line with Look at this everyone, we have this cool thing out of Stanford we are superficially participating in. No, I have not seen any impact. - 1 or 2%

I am a new TJ parent. I haven't heard much about the program. - 1 or 2%

It is encouraging to know that TJ is participating in a program like Challenge Success that seeks to help students redefine the true meaning of success. With so much pressure placed on high school students today, we need the help of school administrators and staff to remind parents and students that success comes in many forms beyond just grades and test scores. I appreciate that the program encourages students to think of creative ways to manage their workload and stress, and really hope that teachers will do their part in recognizing that their expectations of students needs to be reasonable. These teenagers, not young adults, who are still growing and developing and need their sleep. This program can have long-lasting, positive impact on students lives if we all work together. - 1 or 2%

I only have a vague idea of what this program is. From what I can tell, it has no impact on my daughter. - 1 or 2%

The biggest improvement that has been made in the mental health of my child has come not from TJ's Challenge Success program, which really had very little effect up through last year on reducing the incredibly overwhelming workload and pressure my child felt at school, but rather from the FCPS-wide restriction this year on the amount of homework that could be given out. Up through last spring, my child regularly received so much homework that it consumed almost every weeknight and the majority of every weekend, on top of a massively long commute to the school. The school touted the Challenge Success program's postcards from teachers in the hallways supposedly committing themselves to controlling the workload, but it never made a real difference in my child's experience. However, finally, this year, my child has occasionally been able to have enough time to watch a movie with the family, go for a walk, or just get a full night of sleep. It is still not perfect and *nowhere* near the recommended 75 minutes per class per week, but is a vast improvement. I honestly dread the end of the pandemic restrictions and the possible return of teachers freely assigning what they *think* the students should be able to handle and finish on time, as it was never anywhere near a realistic assessment. The school should push further restrictions and aim for 60 minutes per class per week, which might only effectively end up being double that for most students, but still allow for a better school-life balance. Too many TJ students report going to college and being shocked at how much less work and more free time they have than when they were TJ students--meaning that they had to sacrifice the last few years of their childhood at home with their families for a tradeoff that really did not need to be made while they were that young. Thank you. - 1 or 2%

N/A - 1 or 2%

I don't know what it is and I feel like I keep up With TJ communications - 1 or 2%

Challenge Success is not needed and it is damaging to tell kids they shouldn't focus on getting into a good college or that they have too much homework. The program is unnecessary and should be removed from the school. - 1 or 2%

I wish the program could be more impactful. - 1 or 2%

Challenge success has caused the curriculum to be not rigorous enough. My child is bored. - 1 or 2%

No idea what this is. - 1 or 2%

Some teachers seem to implement challenge success' strategy of quality not quantity better than others. My child's core curriculum teachers have done a good job of this. The language teacher my child has does not - should Spanish really be the hardest class at a Science and Tech school? Sadly, my child won't continue a language because the class is so much work and is graded so harshly. - 1 or 2%

There was a noticeable change last year as teachers modified lessons or gained a better understanding of the demands on students and all they have to balance. Our student had less homework, and some lessons were changed to project-based learning from test-based. The fishbowls with students and parents are a valuable means of understanding what the issues are from different perspectives. Helping kids find the right college fit is also so important instead of everyone going for the same places based on prestige. Kids need space to find passions and explore interests and develop their personal talents. - 1 or 2%

I heard about the Challenge Success program shortly after my child started at TJ. I think the goals set by the Team -- "Decoupling workload and rigor; Promoting the importance of sleep; Managing expectations" -- made a lot of sense and I did notice positive impact on the community. Of course, a lot more can be done in the coming years. - 1 or 2%

Until covid it did not seem teachers reduced their work load and the variation between teachers of the same subject is incredible and the difference between levels and difficulty in the various language departments is shocking. I would say in our 3 years we did not see a reduction in rigor or stress. - 1 or 2%

We hope Challenge Success continues to focus on scaling back the quantity of homework. This year has made it evident that the teachers do not need to assign as much homework as they have in the past. Please don't go back to giving more homework. - 1 or 2%

I do not know anything about this program. I think I read nearly all the material in the TJ Newsletters, both that come from the school and from the PTSA. Perhaps this was something that was communicated well, or perhaps I did not pay attention to this as something that required follow-up from my end. - 1 or 2%

I have been impressed with the changes and emphasis on mental health that Challenge Success has brought to the school. I feel my child and the student body as a whole has benefitted. There is still more work to be done in that department but I am grateful we are on the right trajectory. - 1 or 2%

NA - 1 or 2%

My biggest reservation with sending my now senior to TJ was the craziness of the parents, demanding achievement and academic rigor above all things. Challenge success was a refreshing addition to the culture and is making an impact against the still outrageous desires of so many parents. I sincerely hope that the efforts have helped faculty understand the plight of students, and will help the students become healthy adults. - 1 or 2%

We have noticed a decreased workload (some courses) as compared to students who went through TJ a few years prior. There is also a noticeable emphasis on mental wellness on the part of admin, student services, and SGA. - 1 or 2%

I believe that the challenge success and all other program instituted by the school principal Ms. Bonitatibus have been significantly advantageous to bringing some balance in the life of the student. I remember hearing from the parents of TJ student batches prior to my son on how much home work and work pressure there is on the TJ student. And how those parents had altered their lifestyle to support their child. This was in the years preceding the present principal. As our son entered 9th grade and TJ had a new principal, life was the same as before. I remember meeting the principal several times and giving our feedback on how our son was unable to have balance in his weekly routine. All of that has changed over the past few years. I believe challenge success and the other programs instituted by the present principal have certainly focused on the emotional and mental wellness of the student rather than the rankings of the school and how many medals and cups are won by its students. The change is most welcome by a parent like me. That being said, our son has thrived at TJ and is now preparing his onward journey to attend university. He is tremendously confident in his capabilities and ready to take on new adventures. For that we are eternally grateful to TJ. - 1 or 2%

Challenge Success is well-intentioned, but in the area I care about the most - i.e., sleep, it's not made any difference. My child is highly motivated to do well and if there isn't as much work, will do extra studying anyway. Most students (as we've seen during the pandemic) need grades as at least one (large) motivator. For me, the biggest thing would be not to give busy work and to try to coordinate between classes so that students don't end up with tests or big projects due all at the same time for their classes. My child does seem to spend the most time - and has fun with - projects. Beyond that, students expect to have a lot of work at TJ! - 1 or 2%

It has had no impact. I had great hopes when the partnership was announced but there has only been talk but no tangible effect. My kids tell me teachers do not buy into the program and so are unwilling to make any changes to the workload. - 1 or 2%

It's a very shallow program that seems to give students mixed messages. Of course the kids are more than a GPA... but how do you minimize hw and create balance for kids who yearn for a challenge, at a school that promises to give the kids a challenge? - 1 or 2%

My son is a freshman. I hear the words challenge success frequently but have not received an explanation of what it is or how it is supposed to help my student. - 1 or 2%

some teachers have some sense about challenge success. But other teachers still ignore the issues. - 1 or 2%

The concept is sound. Promote and remind the students and parents more frequently. Show/post success stories and new studies to inform the TJ families. - 1 or 2%

The impetus behind this program seems very well-intended and I agree with its goals. However, looking at the reality of current course workload, student stress and sleep, we still have some work to do. I would love to see changes in the course workload and increased importance on non-competitive activities to help students find better balance. - 1 or 2%

I believe Challenge Success has had a great impact on the amount of homework given. I have heard horror stories from years past about how much homework TJ students get, and my son has not experienced that (except awful Spanish 2) in the 1.5 years he has been at TJ. - 1 or 2%

91 Abstains

(16) Faculty/Staff - Should the mascot name be changed?

Yes - 2 or 50%

No - 1 or 25%

Abstain - 1 or 25%

(17) Faculty/Staff - New Mascot Name

Gyroscopes, Calculators - 1 or 50%

If we change the mascot, we also need to drop TJ as he was a slaveowner. I think we should be the Innovators. - 1 or 50%

1 Abstain

(18) Faculty/Staff - Why not?

It provides consistency in this time of continual changes. Colonials doesn't seem to connote anything prejudicial. - 1 or 100%

(19) Faculty/Staff - Challenge Success Impact

None - 1 or 25%

Positive - 1 or 25%

Negative - 0

I have no idea what Challenge Success is - 0

Abstain - 2 or 50%

(20) Faculty/Staff - Challenge Success Comments

I have not found the Challenge Success program to be helpful. Having it run by the principal's cronies does not make it appealing to all teachers. - 1 or 100%

2 Abstains

Statistics from this Ballot

20 Issues have been voted on.

There are 845 pre-registered voters.

207 voters have started their ballots,
but only 187 voters have completed this ballot