

Like many New York districts, the Fonda-Fultonville Central School District found itself immersed in a controversial rebrand of its longtime Native American mascot, following the 2022 New York State Education Department's statewide mandate for removal of such elements by the end of the 2024-25 school year. To comply with the regulation while respecting the community's ties to the Braves mascot, district officials enlisted the expertise of Public Information Specialist Richard Meddaugh and Graphic Artist Bethany Van Velsor to help plan the rebranding. Under their guidance, the district strategically implemented and communicated the rebranding process by utilizing its website, e-mail system, newsletters and social channels, and provided a stunning logo that reflected the community's needs and expectations. This multi-year process began in June 2022, when the Board of Education passed a resolution to replace the Braves mascot. Over the next several months, they sought community input via surveys, focus groups, and voting opportunities, and incorporated input from a high-ranking Mohawk spiritual leader. In May 2023, the district sought new mascot suggestions via a district-wide Google form, and in November 2023, district voters and students in grades 5-12 selected the Valley Hawks as the new mascot. From January to July 2024, Van Velsor designed multiple logo options, two of which were voted on by the community in September. The new logo was selected by a vote of 617 to 388: the flying hawk, with its outstretched wings and determined expression, combined with bold and dynamic typography, visually represents the values, identity, and spirit of the school community. The new branding is proudly displayed on the district website, high school gymnasium, and other areas of the district, the result of a strategic compilation of outreach, creative design, and a thoughtful approach to the sensitive nature of the mascot change for the Fonda-Fultonville community.