

The Name Fight

Hello, my name is *Nya*. My school used to be called John Gill Mandarin Immersion. I like my school because I can speak two languages: English and Chinese. My classmates are very kind. When my hands were full because we were playing Cat's Cradle, my friend Emelia took my lunch box out to the playground for me. My friends can speak different languages. Emma speaks Spanish. I like her because she is quiet and respectful. Lior speaks German, and Vivienne speaks French. A lot of students speak Chinese. I like it when my friends speak other languages because I can learn from them. Everybody in my class feels like they're counted because everyone listens to what others think. My teacher makes everybody feel counted by giving each person an equal vote when we make class decisions like whether we want popsicles or ice-cream when our marble jar gets full.

This year our school district ran out of money and decided to combine our school with another one. The new school named Orion moved to John Gill, and they got to do everything their way. They got to change the name of our school. No one from our school got to vote. And at our first assembly, they got to teach us a song about *their* school, not *our* school. We never got to teach them our song. Before Orion came, we had a school assembly every week. We had our own chants and PRIDE: Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Determination and Excellence. Every week the teachers picked two students that showed PRIDE and they would get called up to the stage by the Principal. After Orion came, there was no more of that.

It made us and our community feel left out.

It was hard to be companions with the Orion community because they wanted everything their way, not our way. They did not have many Chinese students and could not speak Chinese. This made it harder to feel like we were part of them and not invisible. They don't know how it feels to be excluded. My community does not feel like we are the same community as Orion.

Then we went to a meeting and we talked to the school board about our rights. We asked for the chance to have our own name. We told the school board that it's not fair that we have to change our name to Orion. The school board decided that even though the school buildings would still be called Orion, we would get to have our own name for our own community. It's not all fair because our school's name is still Orion, but it's better than before when our community was also called Orion.

I learned that we should always be counted and speak up for our community. If you don't fight for what you believe in, you'll never get your rights. But if you stick together with your community, you will be stronger and louder.