



Suggested HMCRA talking points

For families engaging in formal advocacy and media interviews

“To be a school with a civil rights focus means that all of us, educators and students, practice recognizing inequalities and challenging biases with the goal of contributing to a society which is inclusive of diverse communities. We educate both the brain and the heart. We practice doing good in the world, and being kind and accepting of differences. The children learn about the Greats that came before them, inspiring them to be the best that they can be. We believe in fostering critical thinking, feeling for others, personal and community responsibility, alongside strong academics to create a balanced education.” — Ms. Francis, 1st grade teacher

Focus

- Importance of keeping open all SFUSD schools, including HMCRA
- Flaws in the closure process, including a lack of transparency on data and methodology
- Personal stories that show why you are passionate about HMCRA

Avoid

- Do not compare HMCRA to other schools (but recognize that other school communities are similarly devastated and want to remain open).
- Do not discuss the possibility of going to private school, as this gives the impression that HMCRA families are entitled. If this feels like a true possibility for you, use phrases like “leave the district” or “leave San Francisco” instead.
- Do not focus on non-negotiables for a merger — the message will get muddled and distract from the point of keeping HMCRA open.

General audience & media

Inclusivity & civil rights curriculum

- HMCRA is a safe haven for the LGBTQIA+ community and their allies.
- HMCRA educators have developed our unique [civil rights curriculum](#) with a focus on identity, race, social change, and activism across all grades. Our school serves as a model for all schools, especially amid national hostility toward queer and non-white people.
- HMCRA has fostered an uniquely inclusive space through its small size, thoughtful curriculum, and excellent support for students with disabilities and learning differences. Countless students who struggle in other places have thrived in this environment.

Neighborhood ties & campus

- HMCRA is a popular small neighborhood school with a strong educator-family community that supports learning and inclusion, and is vital to the local Castro community.
- HMCRA was recently renovated with \$14 million from taxpayers. Our campus is an environmentally safe space with a modern HVAC system, a beautifully designed library, a mural by local artist Sirron Norris, and theater space. The district should stop its pattern of waste and allow students to continue to benefit from taxpayers' investments.
- HMCRA is a highly accessible and sustainable school: Many families walk, bike and take public transportation to school.
- HMCRA has been in the same spot since 1891. Harvey Milk fought for the school location to be preserved when it was Douglass Elementary.
- "Founders" fought for 10 years to have the name changed to Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, reflecting a struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights. The school was renamed in Milk's honor in 1996.

Local businesses

- HMCRA and local businesses have built strong connections over the years. For example:
 - Cliff's Variety: Annual shopping partnership
 - The Café: Hosts an annual adults-only drag show fundraiser benefiting HMCRA and the [Ducal Council](#)
 - Spike's: A gathering point for families before and after school
- HMCRA is in a highly accessible location that brings foot traffic to local businesses. Many families walk, bike and take public transportation to and from the school, adding vibrancy and diversity to our neighborhood.
- SFUSD has no plan for immediate use of the HMCRA campus if it closes the school. The district says the site could potentially become an early education center, for which there is questionable demand and no actual plan. HMCRA's closure could leave the site vacant and at risk of becoming neighborhood blight.

Civil rights leaders

- Many families choose HMCRA because it provides a small, safe and inclusive community for all students, including those who are LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent, and/or targeted for bullying.
- HMCRA has civil rights and social justice at its core. The school's educator-developed curriculum is a model for how children can learn to defend human rights, uphold personal and community responsibility, and enact systemic change.
- SFUSD did not consider the LGBTQIA+ community among its equity criteria when identifying schools eligible for closure. Gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation are protected class characteristics in the United States, making SFUSD's exclusion of such factors a significant oversight.
- Belonging in school and in a community is an important antidote to adverse childhood events and trauma. Closing HMCRA would be devastating to many students.
- HMCRA is named in honor of the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California. SFUSD's closure of the school — which Milk fought to keep open — would diminish his legacy and create a hole in the community.

FAQ / Reactive messaging

- **Why does HMCRA have comparatively few students? Is it unpopular?**
 - SFUSD has lowered HMCRA enrollment for years, despite strong parent demand, and is now penalizing us for the effects of their decision. Many families routinely request HMCRA as their top pick in the enrollment lottery, a process the district acknowledges is deeply flawed but has failed to correct. For example, SFUSD has cut HMCRA down to one kindergarten class, despite strong parent demand.
 - SFUSD must retain small schools — an environment that many students thrive in and that families seek. The district's school closure selection process uses faulty methodology to incorrectly conclude that small schools are not viable.
- **Why is HMCRA opposed to a merger?**
 - SFUSD's definition of a merger is actually a closure and re-assignment of students. SFUSD is not facilitating a merging of school communities in a meaningful way. Our educators, curriculum, culture and school's namesake are not part of a merger, making this proposed merger a de facto closure of everything our school stands for.
- **Why is HMCRA opposed to merging with Sanchez?**
 - Our fight to save HMCRA is not an opposition to Sanchez. We oppose the district's flawed process and methodological oversights that led it to propose school closures that will not solve its budget deficit or result in fully enrolled, fully staffed schools.
- **SFUSD has a huge budget deficit. Won't keeping HMCRA open lead to a state takeover?**
 - Let's step back and talk about the big picture. Closing schools does not balance SFUSD's budget or ensure remaining schools will be fully enrolled or fully staffed. HMCRA plays an important role as a small school that creates a safe, inclusive space for all students, including those who are LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent, and/or targeted for bullying. The school must stay open.

Resources

- [Talking points](#) from San Francisco Community School