

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

June 26, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: School Renaming Process Findings (02-25-19-08)

Question

During the February 25, 2019, Board of Education (Board) Meeting, Board Members passed a resolution requesting a review of their master list of potential names for school facilities and current names of all facilities to ensure appropriateness. My office charged the Office of School Support and Improvement to lead an interoffice committee to conduct the review of the master list of potential names for school facilities and current names of all facilities and present their findings for the Board's consideration. The goal of this committee did not include providing recommendations for the removal of school names. This memorandum provides the findings from the work of this committee.

Response

In response to the resolution, the School Naming Committee convened on March 14, 2019, and was composed of members from the following Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) offices:

- Office of School Support and Improvement
- Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs
- Office of the Chief Academic Officer
- Office of General Counsel

Initially, the committee began the process of researching the backgrounds of 113 persons, including 62 who are identified on the Board's master list of candidates for school names and 51 whose names are currently on school buildings. Shortly thereafter, in response to a recommendation from Board member Mrs. Karla Silvestre, the committee contacted Mr. Matthew Logan, executive director, Montgomery History, Montgomery County Historical Society, for assistance in researching the historical perspectives of the names on the list. In consultation with Mr. Logan and other historians identified by Mr. Joshua I. Civin, general counsel, MCPS, the committee developed an aggressive work plan that capitalized on the expertise of local historians and college researchers to conduct a comprehensive review of the master list of potential names and those on existing schools and facilities; the work of the committee included an in-depth review of names, benchmarking of school naming practices, and identification of analytical models that the Board may use to evaluate the appropriateness of names.

Mr. Logan committed to researching the historical perspectives of the 33 names of persons from Montgomery County on the list of suggested names and all existing schools that are named after

individuals. In addition, student researchers from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) were enlisted to research the historical perspectives of the non-Montgomery County persons on the list of suggested names to the Board. Mr. Mark Price and Ms. Devinie Lyle are to be commended for their dedication and participation in this body of work as they continued their studies at UMBC.

Benchmarking of School Naming and Renaming Processes

The committee identified models for naming and renaming used by different institutions for the Board's consideration in evaluating the appropriateness of proposed and existing school names.

1. Oregon State University

Oregon State University (OSU) evaluates renaming requests based on the question: Should a building be renamed because the "context" of an individual's life and legacy is inconsistent with OSU's contemporary mission and values? The "context" is then evaluated by the following:

- Actions taken by an individual vs. viewpoints held by an individual.
- The individual's public vs. private persona with the public persona bearing more weight than the private persona.
- The progression of an individual's viewpoints and life as a whole with actions taken later in life to redress or rectify acting on or holding racist or exclusionary viewpoints having a greater influence.
- The correspondence of an individual's actions and viewpoints to OSU's mission and OSU's and society's values of the time as these factors may have changed over time.
- The engagement of the current OSU community with the "context" of an individual's life based on current OSU and society values.

Given the complexity of an individual's life, the time in which the individual lived, and the changes in institutional and societal values that occur over time, this process allows for an examination of the balance of the viewpoints and actions within the context of the views and policies that may have enabled or supported racist or exclusionary views. OSU then utilizes a renaming request evaluation process that consists of three phases: renaming request is submitted to the Architectural Naming Committee (ANC), preliminary evaluation of renaming request by an ANC subcommittee, and full evaluation of the renaming request by the full ANC. The full ANC then makes a recommendation to the President of the university to rename or not based on the criteria. A process map outlining OSU's full Renaming Request Evaluation Process is included below as a reference (<https://leadership.oregonstate.edu/building-and-place-names/evaluation-process/process>).

**Building and Place Name Advisory Committee
Renaming Request Evaluation Process**

Step 1. Renaming request

- Request to rename submitted to Architectural Naming Committee (ANC)
 - Any community member may submit a renaming request for evaluation
 - In some cases, appropriate for ANC to initiate its own process
 - If request meets threshold for full renaming evaluation (as indicated below), ANC initiates full renaming analysis
 - Submission requirements:
 - Narrative explaining basis for renaming request
 - Citation to references
 - Attachments to support renaming request

Step 2. Preliminary evaluation of renaming request by ANC sub-committee

Criteria to consider: Considering contemporary OSU values, does sufficient documentation exist to demonstrate that the actions or viewpoints of the individual for whom a building or place is named may be inconsistent with OSU’s mission to create an inclusive diverse, and equitable educational environment?

Yes

No

ANC sub-committee evaluates request to determine whether to advance to full renaming analysis

- Outcome:
 - Written sub-committee report recommending ANC renaming evaluation
- Process to provide:
 - Transparency in process; written report posted for review

ANC sub-committee does not advance request to full renaming analysis

- Outcome:
 - Written communication on rationale for decision
- Process to provide:
 - Transparency in process
 - Feedback to requestor where appropriate

Step 3. Full evaluation of renaming request by full ANC

Criteria to consider: Was the “context” of an individual’s life/legacy inconsistent with OSU’s contemporary mission and values? “Context” is evaluated by (1) actions v. viewpoint; (2) public v. private persona; (3) progression of an individual’s viewpoints and life as a whole; (4) whether an individual’s actions and viewpoints corresponded with OSU’s mission and OSU’s and society’s values at the time; and (5) how the OSU community engages with the “context” of an individual’s life

Yes

No

Full ANC makes recommendation to President to rename

- Outcome:
 - Written report on analysis and recommendation to President on the renaming evaluation request
- Process to provide:
 - ANC conducts vote on renaming request
 - Engagement with content-area experts
 - Community engagement and outreach; transparency in process
 - Permanent education at building or place

Full ANC committee does not make recommendation to President to rename

- Outcome:
 - Written report on analysis and recommendation on the renaming evaluation request
- Process to provide:
 - ANC conducts vote on renaming
 - Community engagement and outreach
 - Transparency in process
 - Permanent education at building or place

2. Yale University

In 2016, Yale University (Yale) adopted principles for consideration of requests to withdraw the name of a building or other campus structure or space, following requests to change the name of Calhoun College, one of its residential colleges. Concerns were raised that Calhoun College, named after Vice President John C. Calhoun, a fervent supporter of states’ rights, nullification, and slavery as a “positive good”, served as a reminder of past ties to racist and exclusionary practices.

The principles adopted by Yale included the following:

- Is a principal legacy of the namesake fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University?
- Was the relevant principal legacy significantly contested in the time and place in which the namesake lived?
- Did the University, at the time of a naming, honor a namesake for reasons that are fundamentally at odds with the mission of the University?

- Does a building whose namesake has a principal legacy fundamentally at odds with the University's mission, or which was named for reasons fundamentally at odds with the University's mission, play a substantial role in forming community at the University?

The report stated: "We expect that renaming will typically prove warranted only when more than one principle listed here points toward renaming; even when more than one principle supports renaming, renaming may not be required if other principles weigh heavily in the balance."

A renaming request must be submitted in an application that meets the following administrative requirements:

- states the grounds on which the name should be changed;
- specifies how the Principles on Renaming require that the name be changed, presenting a thoroughly researched and well-documented case with supporting historical and other evidence; and
- meets other administrative requirements as the Office of the Secretary may from time to time establish.

Yale decided to retain the name of Calhoun College, acknowledging that slavery and racism are part of the university's and nation's history that cannot be erased. The university acted on the belief that a building has been named for someone who made major contributions to the university and renaming should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. In the case of Calhoun, the presumption was that there are lessons to be learned from history and the institution has taken the approach of engaging Yale's community of scholars, students, and staff in deepening their understanding of the institutional history and committing to improving campus diversity, inclusionary practices, hiring and retention practices for diversity, expanding programs and services for students, and establishing an academic and intellectual Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Migration.

3. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)

In 2015, a group of J.E.B. Stuart High School students led an effort to begin reconsideration of the school name to find a name they believed was more representative of the community. For historical perspective, the school opened in 1959 and was named for J.E.B. Stuart, a general in the Confederate Army. The following year, the U.S. District Court ordered Fairfax County to comply with integration of white and black students. In 1961, the school admitted its first black students.

In February 2016, the School Board directed the superintendent to initiate community engagement to determine whether or not there was sufficient support from the community to change the name of the school. An existing FCPS regulation states that the School Board may consider a change in the name of a school for a compelling need.

The name was changed to Justice High School in 2016 following a community inclusive process that included the following:

- A survey was conducted in May 2016 to solicit community interest in changing the name of the school.
- A community meeting was held to solicit names for consideration.

- The names were sent out for community voting in June 2016. Per FCPS regulation, voting is limited to one vote per household within the J.E.B. Stuart High School attendance area.
- Results of the vote were for the purposes of demonstrating the community's preferences.
- The superintendent reflected the community preferences in the recommendations that were sent to the School Board.

As the district embarked on the implementation plan, the following factors were considered:

- Cost for required items to be changed or replaced in an efficient and equitable manner
- Identification of systemic implications of a name change
- Communication plan for students, staff, and the school community
- Preservation of school history
- Plan for disposition of J.E.B. Stuart High School memorabilia
- Plan and preparation for rededication ceremony for the following school year

4. The Truth and Reconciliation Model

This model has been used internationally to unearth the truth about human rights violation under military regimes. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to investigate gross human rights violations that were perpetrated during the period of the Apartheid regime from 1960 to 1994, including abductions, killings, and torture. Its mandate covered violations by both the state and the liberation movements, and allowed the commission to hold special hearings focused on specific sectors, institutions, and individuals. Since its inception, the truth and reconciliation concept, used extensively in Africa and Latin America, has developed into an effective global strategy for dealing with war crimes and other human rights abuses.

The approach is one of "restorative justice," which differs from the customary adversarial and retributive justice. The truth and reconciliation process seeks to heal relations between opposing sides by uncovering all pertinent facts, distinguishing truth from lies, and allowing for acknowledgement, appropriate public mourning, forgiveness, and healing. The truth and reconciliation model promotes the belief that confronting and reckoning with the past is necessary for successful transitions from conflict, resentment, and tension, to peace and connectedness.

The following summarizes the benchmarking process:

- The context of an individual's life or legacy should be considered in the naming/renaming process.
- Consideration should be given to the balance of the individual's life, public and private, and should not isolate singular actions or behaviors.
- Alignment of institutional and societal values with those of the individual's life or legacy at the time the individual lived and within the current context is relevant.
- Should a thoroughly researched and well-documented case with supporting historical and other evidence offer a basis for renaming or not considering a name due to a contradiction of past or current values, consideration may be given to acknowledging the past to move towards healing and reconciliation.

In-depth Review

The committee met several times to develop research criteria that served as a guideline for historians and student researchers from Montgomery History and UMBC as they gathered comprehensive background information on the list of potential and existing school names. Using the information gathered from the benchmarking process, the following criteria were requested in conducting research on each of the names:

- General information
- Legacy, significant contributions
- Historical context
- Contributions to society which prompted advancement in equity
- Issues of debate lending themselves to discriminatory practices
- Viewpoints and/or actions which create dissonance with MCPS Board of Education values and Policy ACA as provided below:
 - Board values (Learning, Relationships, Respect, Excellence, and Equity)
 - MCPS Policy ACA: *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency* states “. . . Educational outcomes should never be predictable by any individual’s actual or perceived personal characteristics.” In accordance, any person whose persona would evoke evidence of intolerance for nondiscrimination, equity, and cultural proficiency would give the Board pause for consideration.

The research completed by Montgomery History and UMBC was organized into a template and is provided in Attachment A. The full narrative for the school names researched by Montgomery History is also included.

Key Findings

The committee reviewed the research submitted by Montgomery History and UMBC and utilized the evaluation criteria as identified in the benchmarking process with the following findings:

- The historical background of a limited number of individuals on the list of existing and potential names confirmed they, or members of their families, owned slaves during periods and locations in this nation’s history where slavery was consistent with some societal values. These current or potential school names are as follows:
 - Colonel Zadok Magruder, for whom Col. Zadok Magruder High School is currently named, owned slaves.
 - John Poole, for whom John Poole Middle School is currently named, owned slaves.
 - Thomas S. Wootton, for whom Thomas S. Wootton High School is currently named, owned slaves.
 - Montgomery Blair High School, is currently named for Montgomery Blair, an individual who shifted his actions and behavior from supporting slavery and racist policies, to aiding the anti-slavery movement in later stages of his life. This shift in his actions and behavior was done while his extended family continued to own slaves.
 - Richard Montgomery, for whom Richard Montgomery High School is currently named, owned slaves.
 - John Clark, whose name is on the Board’s list of potential school names, owned slaves.
- In the 1920’s and 1930’s, following the re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan, the United States of America experienced a rise in racism and racial confrontations. Colonel E. Brooke Lee, for whom

Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School is named, was a prominent figure in Montgomery County government.

- His actions and behaviors in this time period served to purposely develop racially restrictive policies. These policies prohibited African-Americans from buying or renting homes in Silver Spring subdivisions. Black people could only live in the suburbs if they were domestic servants. The policies blanketed the Silver Spring area, forcing minorities to live elsewhere.
- Of the remaining names researched and analyzed using the evaluation criteria benchmarked with other institutions, the committee found no individuals whose actions or behaviors were inconsistent with the vision and mission of MCPS at the time or would be at odds with current societal values or those of the current Board as communicated in *Policy ACA: Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*.

Conclusion

The committee strongly suggests that moving forward, the Board considers utilizing the evaluation criteria enumerated through the benchmarking process in the school naming process. In addition, it is important that the known acts of the individuals being considered do not contradict the values of the Board (Learning, Relationships, Respect, Excellence, and Equity) and *Policy ACA: Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*. Finally, in cases where there is a known dissonance between the context of the individual's life and the values of the Board, a model such as Truth and Reconciliation may be employed to acknowledge and reconcile those differences in a way to bring healing and transition to the community.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kimberly A. Statham, deputy superintendent, office of school support and improvement.

JRS:KAS:aml

Attachment

Copy to:

Dr. Statham
Dr. Navarro
Dr. Zuckerman
Dr. Johnson
Mr. Civin
Ms. Webb