

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

April 17, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

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

Question

The Board approved a new business item that directed the superintendent to:

- support the local Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School community in its consideration of the name of the proposed new school building, which support might include a committee comprised of community and school staff;
- review the Board of Education's master list of names for naming school facilities to ensure that all names are appropriate candidates for school facilities; and
- provide a review of the names of all schools in MCPS.

Response

I have 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. The committee will present its findings for the Board's consideration. This memorandum provides an update on the work of this committee.

The School Naming Committee convened on March 14, 2019, and is composed of staff in the following 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 114 persons identified on the Board's master list of candidates for school names and/or whose names currently are used for school buildings. In response to a recommendation from Board Member Karla Silvestre, the committee contacted Mr. Matthew Logan, executive director, Montgomery County Historical Society, for assistance in researching the historical perspectives of the names on the Board's master list. Mr. Logan agreed to research the historical perspectives of the 33 names of persons from Montgomery County on the list of suggested names.

To best serve the Board's interest in having a complete historical perspective on the lives of persons whose names are on, or under consideration for placement on, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) facilities, substantial research is required to carefully examine the merits and possible areas of concern associated with the individuals. Such research is likely to require an in-depth review rather than the consideration of information typically contained in biographies or resumes easily accessed by laypersons. Within the committee, there is a high level of concern related to completing an exhaustive and credible level of research of the 114 names within the time allotted.

In consultation with Mr. Logan and other historians identified by Mr. Joshua I. Civin, general counsel, the committee developed an aggressive work plan that will capitalize on the expertise of local historians and college researchers that can conduct a comprehensive review of the master list of potential names and those on existing schools and facilities. The work plan considers allocation of time for expert researchers to conduct an in-depth review of names, benchmark school naming practices, and identify analytical models that the Board may use to evaluate the appropriateness of names.

The committee has met several times to develop and implement a rubric to serve as a guideline for historians and student researchers from Montgomery History; Montgomery College; and The University of Maryland, Baltimore County, as they gather comprehensive background information on the list of potential and existing school names. The rubric contains the following:

- General information;
- Legacy, significant contributions;
- Definitive works/citations; and
- Criticisms/concerns regarding inconsistencies with MCPS Board of Education values and Board Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*.

Next Steps

Currently, the committee is working is to develop evaluation criteria that may be used by the Board in consideration of the appropriateness of suggested and existing names for facilities. The committee strongly suggests that consideration of any names aligns with the Board's values and that the known acts of the individuals do not contradict the values of the Board (Learning, Relationships, Respect, Excellence, and Equity) and the tenets in Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*.

Policy ACA states "Educational outcomes shall not be predictable by 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 committee will isolate two to three analytical models that the Board may utilize to evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed and existing school names. The work of this committee is expected to continue through the spring and the models and findings will be presented to the Board in late May 2019. I will continue to keep you informed.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kimberly A. Statham, deputy superintendent of school support and improvement, of 240-740-3100.

JRS:KAS:aml

Copy to:

- Dr. Navarro
- Dr. Statham
- Dr. Zuckerman
- Mr. Civin
- Dr. Johnson
- Ms. Diamond
- Mr. Turner
- Ms. Webb