



# School Renaming Task Force

School Renaming Task Force Committee Report

Austin ISD Board of Trustees

October 1, 2018

## Committee Members

Barbara Corbett-Spears, Community, TriChair

Jason Summerville, Teacher, TriChair

Vanessa Santamaria Dainton, Parent, TriChair

Raul Alvarez, Community, Member

Larry Amaro, Community, Member

Gabriel Estrada, Community, Member

Roxanne Evans, Community, Member

Valeria Gonzalez, Student, Member

John Hewlett, Staff, Member

Sarah N. Johnson, Staff, Member

Carment Kiara, Parent, Member

Renee Lafair, Community, Member

Nelson Linder, Community, Member

Maggy McGiffert, Parent, Member

Nancy Mims, Parent, Member

Kazique Prince, Community, Member

Erica Saenz, Community, Member

Ángela-Jo Touza-Medina, Community, Member

Angela Ward, Staff, Member

Leo York, Student, Member

Emilio Zamora, Community, Member

## Charge

The Board has directed that the district move forward with processes to rename the following five facilities: the John T. Allan Facility, Eastside Memorial Early College High School at the Albert Sidney Johnston Campus, Zachary Taylor Fulmore Middle School, Sidney Lanier Early College High School, and John H. Reagan Early College High School. The charge of the School Renaming Task Force was the following: recommend more detailed criteria in the implementation of district policy CW; review new facility names proposed by Campus Advisory Councils and the community for consistency with the above criteria; recommend an appropriate use of artifacts bearing the former names of the five identified facilities.



## Narrative and Issues

The intent of the School Renaming Task Force process and criteria was to enable a fair and transparent process where schools and communities could be held accountable to reconcile past and present damage caused by symbols of the Confederacy and oppression. The renaming process brought opportunities to analyze understanding and education around inequity and oppression that can come through symbols and conversations around equity and inclusion in the community. The renaming was framed as an opportunity to own control as a community and school, of how we view ourselves and want to be viewed and as an opportunity to better represent Austin ISD values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. It was framed also as an opportunity to better know and celebrate the local and national history of “unsung heroes,” often people of color, who have done much for our community but have not been formally recognized. Where this message was pushed, achieving, accepting and understanding how this looks in process and results, shows that our communities are still struggling to understand how symbols of the confederacy connect with struggles to achieve equity and inclusion. It was our hope and intention that this process would be an opportunity to have deeper conversations moving forward and how they should be a priority and a start to making ongoing community-wide improvements toward equity and inclusion.

Some of the concerns that hindered full acceptance of the opportunity of renaming included the following:

- Not seeing it as an issue: lacking understanding of the history and impact, colorblindness (not understanding the ongoing role played by racism).
- Worrying about money, not seeing the price of not renaming.
- Worrying that renaming would be a check mark and the district would feel good and that equity work would end there.
- The conflation of school history and achievement with the name itself of the school; Inability to separate school pride and school history from the history of a name in itself.
- The belief that school history would be erased, where names and what we curate or monuments we value are considered history themselves. Artifacts and curations of space show what we value in history. Museums are not neutral.
- A sense of unfairness, where there are other names of schools that have come up, of supporters of slavery and slave-owners that ought also to be analyzed and possibly renamed. The sense of unfairness was felt so strongly that it hindered the importance of starting the process of renaming at all of any school. A common trend was stated, “if that other school does not change as I think it should then we will not either.” If they believed in the opportunity, they would have embraced the change as role models taking the higher ground.
- A sense of equity related unfairness of picking on Eastside schools. Media and the community voiced concerns that the schools chosen were all on the Eastside. Where some schools were on the Eastside, some were not, such as Fulmore and Lanier. One



would have to delve further into history to look at when, why and how names were chosen for these schools.

- A sense of basic needs not being met and an inability to see beyond them. Some schools felt vulnerable in that many students are trying to just make ends meet and cannot process beyond that.
- The re-appropriation or re-owning by people of color of the school name in a way that worked as a way to have power but failing to see the power of leaving the last name.

Based on submissions received, expectations for the Naming Committees or Campus Advisory Councils were not clear. Schools were communicated to on how to go about the process and what to expect and were asked what questions they had or if they needed support. In the final process, schools still voted strongly on popular vote, swayed by some of the community, students and parents, instead of just the criteria as guided.

The Allan Renaming Committee only submitted one name after they were instructed to submit three. The Allan Renaming Committee expressed concerns that they had not been given ample time to achieve the task of recommending three names.

We understood that the campus renaming committees avoided recommending names of people for various reasons. One reason is that students felt that by renaming to a 'place' they would not have to choose a person that may need renaming in the future as 'humans are fallible.' Although the place names chosen did not reflect the intent of the renaming. Task force members were also concerned that the process could be flawed because people who did meet the criteria in a more significant way were excluded from the list. Such names included John N. Johnson, Abel & Gloria Ruiz or John Trevino, Jr. as examples of names that were cut from the top of the list from Fulmore.

We recommend more discussions at the community, Campus Advisory Councils and districtwide level to talk more about the intent and the 'why' around the renaming process and why it is a priority and importance. We recommend conversations and collaborative work about how to extend the work to help all students, with the end to ensure that ALL students, especially students of color, are included in the path to success.

#### Agenda Meeting Focus

- Through the course of four meetings on April 10, 2018, April 17, 2018, April 24, 2018, September 25, 2018:

#### Accomplishments

- Created detailed person criteria and considerations for place criteria with the understanding that the criteria would guide the processes for renaming at each campus;
- Began inquiry for handling artifacts and memorabilia bearing the previous names;



- Reviewed the submissions of names by the Campus Advisory Councils or naming committees of Allan Facility, Fulmore Middle School, Lanier High School, and Reagan High School

#### Goals Not Yet Met

- The task force was not provided name submission for Eastside Memorial Early College High School at the Johnston Campus. Since the task force charge was initiated, the Eastside Campus Advisory Council was granted permission to delay renaming the Johnston Campus until the school modernization process finalizes.
- Recommendation for professional-level archiving of artifacts was not reached. The task force recognized a need to collaborate with professional archivists from the community and district to best address this charge. Ongoing meetings are scheduled for artifact review by the archival workgroup.

#### Recommendations:

##### Recommendation for John T. Allan: Anita Ferrales Coy

1. Anita Ferrales Coy: Criteria met based on information provided: Historically Connected, Servant Leader, Committed to Education, Respected for strong principles, Committed to Education, Inspirational & Visionary.
2. Abstain: No name submitted due to the short amount of time provided.
3. Abstain: No name submitted due to the short amount of time provided.

##### Recommendation for Zachary Taylor Fulmore: consensus not reached.

1. Sarah Beth Lively: Some criteria met based on information provided: Historically Connected, Servant Leader, Committed to Education, Respected for strong principles, Committed to Education. The Task Force could not meet a consensus because the Lively nomination did not make a compelling argument based on the criteria.
2. Moon Tower: Did not meet enough of the place criteria.
3. South Congress (SoCo): Did not meet enough of the place criteria.

##### Recommendation for Sidney Lanier: Diana H. Castañeda

1. North Central: Did not meet enough of the place criteria
2. Diana H. Castañeda: she clearly met criteria based on information provided: Historically Connected, Servant Leader, Committed to Education, Respected for strong principles, Committed to Education, Inspirational & Visionary.
3. Lanier: Task members noted that it does not meet the criteria which was critical to the purpose of the renaming.

##### Recommendation for John H. Reagan: Barack H. Obama

1. Reagan: Task members noted that it does not meet the criteria which was critical to the purpose of the renaming.



2. Barack H. Obama: He meets the criteria: Historically Connected, Servant Leader, Committed to Education, Respected for strong principles, Committed to Education, Inspirational & Visionary, Embodies Equity & Social Justice.
3. Northeast: Did not meet enough of the place criteria.

Further Recommendations:

- Historical/background information on the nominations shows that they were not sufficiently vetted.
- Members expressed concern that the vetting process at the campus level was not consistent in the application of criteria for renaming the schools.
- Members expressed concern that district communications with campuses via the “blueprint” may have been confusing and created inconsistencies in processes from campus to campus.
- The intent by which the school names are being changed needs to be more explained and better understood in the campus process and therefore the names should better reflect this.
- Regarding the renaming, a school and taking out the first name and initial does not constitute a substantive change.
- Place name nominations did not meet enough of the place criteria to show a substantive change of the intent of the renaming. It is now clear that place criteria were not well specified to guide schools to submit nominations that the task force would agree that met criteria.
- The task force would like to recommend giving more time to campuses to better understand and resolve the issues brought up by the task force.

Respectfully Submitted,

The School Renaming Task Force