

# Andrew Jackson School Name Change Town Hall

March 25, 2021



# Welcome!

- Name Change Council
- Kelly Espinosa, Principal
- Chris Davies, Director - System of Great Schools (Schools Office)
- Adam Northam, Director - Internal Communications (Communications Office)

# What's in a Name?

School names are an important part of our learning environments and are a reflection of our collective values. They should:

- honor the legacy of the school community,
- cultivate a sense of pride in our history and traditions, and
- ensure that all students, staff, and families feel respected, seen, and heard.

# Our Context

The discussion about changing our name has been ongoing since 2019. Many in our community feel Andrew Jackson does not reflect our values as a community or the values of the School District of Philadelphia:

- Andrew Jackson, the 7th president of the United States, enslaved 95 Black people to enrich himself.
- He ordered the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans in the American South in order to open up more land for white-owned plantations that enslaved and brutalized Black people.
- He pushed for, signed, and implemented the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which caused the deaths of at least 5,000 Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee and Seminole people.



## Because of this...

With the support of the District, we have made the decision to change our school name to one that will better reflect our school's values and the diverse students and families we serve.



# The Process

The renaming process consists of five phases:

- 1) School Name Request Submission
- 2) Name Request Review
- 3) Community Engagement and Name Proposal
- 4) Superintendent Review
- 5) Board Approval



# Proposed New Name, Option 1: Fanny Jackson Coppin School

Fanny Jackson Coppin:

- Born into slavery in 1837 in Washington, DC. When she was ten, her aunt purchased her freedom.
- Second African-American woman in the country to receive a B.A. degree.
- Moved to Philadelphia in 1865 and served for 37 years as a teacher and principal of the Institute for Colored Youth at 9th and Bainbridge.
  - Expanded the curriculum to include industrial education
  - Established a Women's Industrial Exchange to showcase the work of young women
  - Founded a Home for Girls and Young Women.
- In 1897, she became vice-president of the National Association of Colored Women.

By changing the name of our school, we have an opportunity to celebrate an important historical figure in our neighborhood who has long gone under-recognized because she was a Black woman. It is one small step in the work of dismantling white supremacy.



# Proposed New Name, Option 2: Acel Moore School

## Acel Moore:

- Born in Philadelphia in 1940 and grew up in South Philadelphia.
- Started at 43-year career at the Inquirer as a copy clerk, became only the fourth Black reporter at the paper in 1968, and in 1977 became the first Black reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize.
- Fought to ensure that the Inquirer's coverage included the stories and perspectives of Black and other minority communities.
- Committed to increasing the representation of Black journalists in the Inquirer newsroom and in newsrooms across the country, co-founding the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists.
- Strong supporter of student journalism in Philadelphia through his work with the Acel Moore High School Journalism Workshop, an ongoing project with the Inquirer that has introduced a generation of School District of Philadelphia students to careers in journalism, and the Prime Movers program, which sponsors student journalism clubs in district schools.

Acel Moore's goals were to portray the full range of Black lives in Philadelphia and to change the world with what he wrote. His skills as a stellar and sensitive reporter were exceeded only by his devoted mentorship to scores of aspiring journalists, including many School District of Philadelphia students.





# Proposed New Name, Option 3: William Still School

## William Still:

- Born free in Medford, NJ, moved to Philadelphia in 1844. Taught himself to read and write and became the first Black secretary of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society.
- Known as the “Father of the Underground Railroad” for his crucial role in both financing Tubman and others’ missions to free people and sheltering around 1,000 fugitives in Philadelphia.
- One of Still’s homes at 625 Delhi Street, where he personally sheltered fugitives, is in the school’s catchment.
- Still also fought for civil rights as well. In 1859, he helped organize the successful campaign to desegregate Philadelphia streetcars. At the national level, Still participated in the Colored Conventions, the precursor to the NAACP and took part in the fight for Black suffrage.

It’s shocking there aren’t more monuments to Still in the city, as he was one of the most prominent Black abolitionists in Philadelphia and nationally. He took on tremendous risks —illegally sheltering refugees from slavery— for a just cause. His life has so much to teach us about what it means to fight for freedom and justice. His name deserves recognition among his contemporaries like Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, but has not received it. This is one opportunity to correct that.



# Proposed New Name, Option 4: Barbara Rose Johns Powell School

## Barbara Rose Johns:

- Born in 1935 and attended segregated schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia.
- As a 16 year old, led the 450 students at her all-Black high school in a two-week strike over school conditions.
- Convinced the NAACP to take the students' case, which became one of the five cases including *Brown v. Board of Education* that would end the practice of “separate but equal,” and was the only case in that group initiated by a student protest.
- Was forced to flee Virginia after a cross was burned at her home and threats were made to her life.
- Moved to Philadelphia in 1955 and graduated from Drexel University.
- Worked as a school librarian in for twenty-four years, passing along her love of reading and education to a generation of Philadelphia students until her death in 1991.

Barbara Rose Johns was a School District of Philadelphia librarian whose lifelong commitment to education began with an audacious protest that played a critical role in the dismantling of school segregation and Jim Crow. Although *Brown* is one of the most famous Supreme Court cases, her role has rarely been mentioned because for too long it was unheard of to credit a young, Black girl with playing a major part in historical events.

# Next Steps

- Continued Name Change Council Meetings
- Next town hall, April 15th @7:00pm (tentative time)
- Stakeholder input: Surveys
  - Student survey





# Questions?