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**Jefferson Elementary School Renamed to Delia Bolden Elementary School**

*The Board of Education Passes Resolution to Officially Rename Jefferson Elementary After the First African-American CHS Student & Graduate Delia Bolden*

**July 1, 2022** - The South Orange & Maplewood School District Board of Education (BOE) as per Resolution 4320 [[bit.ly/3bD0Slq](https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/boe/resolutions/4320)] approved the renaming of Jefferson Elementary School to the Delia Bolden Elementary School during its meeting on Wednesday, June 29.

Delia Bolden was the first African American woman to graduate from Columbia High School in 1912. Upon her graduation, Ms. Bolden wrote a brilliant essay that was published in the 1912 yearbook and read at her commencement [Read the full essay here: <https://www.mattersmagazine.com/post/a-voice-from-the-archives>].

As part of the BOE resolution, the District will take the necessary steps, including but not limited to installing new signage and updating the District website, to reflect the new name by September 8, 2022. The District will also consider how to memorialize the building's previous name of Jefferson Elementary School and the reasons for the name change on school grounds by June 30, 2023.

SOMSD Board President, Thair Joshua shared, "The Board of Education is excited about the new name of Delia Bolden Elementary School. Choosing Delia Bolden, who was the first African American woman to graduate from Columbia High School in 1912, is a fitting way to begin the new legacy at the school."

The Board of Education previously adopted Resolution 4190 at its August 16, 2021 meeting directing the Superintendent or a designee to work with the students of Jefferson Elementary School to seek input from the District's student community to propose a new name for the school to the Board of Education by June 30, 2022, so that the Board may vote on the adoption of such name to take effect commencing with the 2022-2023 school year.

The Jefferson Elementary School community recommended to the Board of Education five names for consideration, which the Board shared with the public at its June 20, 2022 meeting and discussed further during its regularly scheduled monthly public board meeting on June 27, 2022 meeting. The names students presented for the Board's consideration were:

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg, U.S. Supreme Court Justice
- Erna Schneider Hoover, Mathematician & Inventor, CHS Alumnus, Class of 1944
- Delia Bolden, First Female African-American Graduate of CHS, Class of 1912
- Amalya Lyle Kears, First woman and second African American person to be appointed as a justice on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, CHS Alumnus, Class of 1955
- Joetta Clark Diggs, Track & Field Athlete & Four-time Olympian (1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000), CHS Alumnus, Class of 1980; and



- New Legacy Elementary School was also provided as part of the attribute approach, but the students ultimately chose to name the school after a notable person (“LEGACY” acronym: L-learned, learning, lifelong learners; E-engaged, excellence, ethical citizens; G-gifted, goal-oriented, ground-breaking; A-ambitious, accepting, achievement; C-creative, confident, cooperative; Y-yearning, youth, year-round)

As part of the initial process all teachers taught lesson plans on name stories. In this first stage, in order to help students understand the importance and power associated with names, they created “Name Stories.” Students listened to Alma and How She Got Her Name by Juana Martinez Neal and journaled about their own names. Many students shared their name stories with their classmates.

For the second part of the process, all classes selected positive attributes that they wanted to be considered in the renaming process. Students were provided with copies of the school’s mission statement, as well as copies of SOMSD’s mission statement. They were encouraged to make connections between the mission statements and the positive attributes. Most classes selected acronyms with the common threads among the suggestions being: Diverse/Diversity, Acceptance, Perseverance/Determination and Respect/Kindness.

Students in the 5th grade subcommittee reviewed the submissions for the Attribute Approach. They then weighted the merits and creativity of each attribute and narrowed it down and voted on their favorite submissions. Based on these submissions, the student subcommittee considered the various positive traits and attributes they reviewed in session #1 and were encouraged to consider people who exemplify those traits. When researching potential candidates for the name change, students were encouraged to look closely at the person’s achievements, personal qualities and behavior. **Achievements:** Did they accomplish something important during their lifetime? Did their accomplishments make history? Did they somehow make life better for others? **Personal qualities:** Do they possess the qualities and attributes we value? Did they have to overcome obstacles in order to succeed? Are they inspiring to others? **Behavior:** Does their behavior show that they value all kinds of people? Simply put, do their actions and beliefs show that they are a good person?

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ronald Taylor also shared, “I am extremely proud of the efforts of Principal Hutchinson, her leadership team, teachers and students for their heartfelt work. When the Board began discussing the possibility of this renaming I recommended engaging our students. Our educators and students far exceeded my high expectations. They turned this opportunity into the ultimate teachable moment. A thoughtful real life civics experience that will impact our community for decades to come. They indeed have educated us all on not only the new namesake but four (4) other very worthy candidates. Women of distinction whose legacy we all know more about.”

Many thanks to the Jefferson school community, administrators and staff for leading this charge, culminating in a historic moment for the now Delia Bolden Elementary School and to Jefferson families for their support! The District acknowledges the meaningful contribution of Jefferson’s entire student body who participated in the renaming process, members of the renaming committee and the staff who helped facilitate the process. In addition, we’d like to acknowledge the Columbia High School Alumni Archive Committee for helping to identify Ms. Bolden and several other Columbia Alumni who were considered for this honor.

[See attachments: Photos of Delia Bolden and 1912 Newark Evening Star published article of Ms. Bolden’s commencement speech and article]

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#### **About the South Orange & Maplewood School District**

The School District of South Orange and Maplewood serves more than 7,200 students in ten schools, including one early-childhood center, six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The community and its schools are racially and economically diverse with more than 90 percent of Columbia High School graduates planning to attend college each year. The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered



environment through multiple pathways; re-imagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.