Rename Ramsey Finalists Announced

On Friday, January 27th, a group of 23 panelists (students, staff, parents, board members, historians and community members) met for six hours to narrow down the top 14 new name ideas (from hundreds of nominations!) to a final five. We will present these names to the RMS community for feedback at our February 28th event. Here are the Top 5 finalists.

Dorothy Vaughn Middle School

Dorothy Vaughan was a pioneer mathematician when America was fighting World War II. With most of the men off to fight, there were many jobs now available to African Americans that were not usually offered. The President had issued an order that called for desegregation of all government agency jobs. The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA/NASA) needed to fill jobs to process aeronautical data.

In 1943, Dorothy was a high school math teacher, which was just about the only good paying, high standing job that a college educated woman could get. The day she took a trip to the post office to look at the bulletin board, she saw the notice for a mathematician. It would change her life, and she would find her purpose.

Not only did she take the risk of applying for a job not normally offered to black people, she took the position knowing that she would have to face the challenges of working within a field dominated by white men. With that in mind, she made it her business to excel, which in turn, set her place in history. Dorothy worked with an all black, female group of computers, in the segregated section of the NACA facility called the West Group. During her 28 years of employment, Dorothy advocated for all of the women of her segregated group, as well as white women in other areas of NACA, for promotions and pay raises.

Dorothy Vaughan was not only a brilliant mathematician, but was also an exceptional machinist. With those combined skills, she was able to master the FORTRAN computer and share her knowledge with the West Group.

Along with her many positive contributions to NACA, she is well known as one of the key people who helped launch the first US satellite into space.

Dorothy J Vaughan was a passionate risk-taker. She believed in herself and surpassed well beyond the limits that society had placed on all women. Her success opened the door for black women, to the world of mathematicians and scientists, so that they would be readily accepted as engineers.

Go Vaughn Rhinos?

Martha Ripley Middle School

Martha G. Ripley was a physician who supported and fought for equal rights for women and the welfare of children. Martha learned early in life how important it is to help others. Her parents maintained an Underground Railroad station in a cave behind their home, and Martha helped by bringing their fugitive friends food until they could safely send them on their way.
Martha Ripley Middle School (cont.)

Martha is best known for being the founder of a maternity hospital here in Minneapolis, in 1888. Ripley Memorial Hospital provided medical care to women who were pregnant, and would otherwise be turned away at other hospitals, because they were unmarried, or lived lives that did not follow society’s decided rules for women at the time.

Martha Ripley’s hospital did so well at saving the lives of infants, and preventing the spread of disease, that she was asked to give speeches numerous times to other medical professionals around the country. At these lectures, she spoke of what it means to “heal the whole person”, by providing social services along with medical care. She also gave instructions on some of the things doctors could do to prevent infections and epidemics.

Along with her tireless effort in the field of medicine, and social reform, Martha Ripley advocated for female officers on the police force, she lobbied for a union for female domestic workers, (maids) and pushed for upgrades in sanitation and clean water. She was also nominated for Director of Public Schools, but she was not elected because she was a woman. She did all of these things while she served as President of the Women’s Suffrage Association from 1883 to 1889.

Martha G. Ripley was a woman who was determined, outspoken, and throughout her life fought for what was most right. She is a fine example of the principles, and mission, of our school.

Go Ripley Rhinos?

Justice Alan Page Middle School

Justice Alan Page was the first African-American Supreme Court justice in Minnesota. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Alan Page played many successful seasons for the Minnesota Vikings. Throughout his career on the bench, Page was known for his humility and level-headed decision making. He retired at the age of 70 saying, “It has been an honor to serve the people of Minnesota.” He now writes children’s books and supports educational causes.

Alan Page played 218 games over 15 seasons in the NFL and never missed a game. He is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame and played in each of the Vikings four Super Bowls. However, those accolades are not what Mr. Page will be remembered for or why his name should be on our beloved school. It is Mr. Page’s dedication to public service, justice and students in Minnesota that make him stand out.

Justice Page’s greatest contribution to society and education is the Page Education Foundation. Founded by Page and his wife, Diane, the Page Foundation has provided over $12 million worth of scholarships to over 6,000 students since 1988. Page Scholars have become a fixture in Minneapolis schools and the foundation continues to support students of color in Minnesota schools. In addition, Page continually does public speaking engagements about race and education.

Alan Page’s spirit is alive and well in Minnesota and we hope that he is able to accomplish more in the years ahead. However, the fact that he is still alive should not deter us from celebrating and acknowledging his legacy to Minnesota history. He lives on as a reminder of how determination, resolve, hard work and compassion represent the most Minnesotan of values. He says he would be honored to have our school named after him!

Go Page Rhinos?
Prince Roger Nelson Middle School

Prince is the most commercially successful musician of all time selling over 100 million albums and more—but he didn’t make art just to make money. His music promoted messages of black pride, self-love, loving life and being happy with who you are. At the core of Prince’s music, he stood for the marginalized, the voiceless, and those with complicated identities. He reshaped how we perceive blackness, male masculinity, and sexuality.

Prince redefined music as we know it, and created a definitive “Minneapolis sound” throughout his ventures. He raised money for over 100,000 low-opportunity young adults to get tech jobs. He was a true believer in advancing technology and sought ways to benefit young people of color from low income backgrounds to get gainful employment and know-how in the industry.

Prince also anonymously raised over 1.5 million dollars for Black Lives Matter and $250,000 to the Eau Claire Promise Zone to help fund preschools. He was never one to boast or report his charitable action. This, also speaks to his character, generosity and legacy.

Prince is a very worthy school name nomination because he challenged our perspectives on what it means to be African-American, a man, an artist and a Minnesotan. He is a great example students as we look towards a future where we will refuse to be afraid of our differences and embrace who we truly are.

Prince grew up in Minneapolis, learned music in Minneapolis and went to public schools in Minneapolis. Although he died last summer, his legacy will live on as long as there is music in the world. Prince’s message carried an anthem of both “it’s ok to be who you are” and “it’s ok to express who you are”- advice every young mind should live by while seeking knowledge and growth.

Go Purple Rhinos?
Bde Ota (Buh-day Oh-tah) Middle School

Bde means “lake” and Ota means “many” in the Dakota language. Bde Ota is also the name that the Dakota people use to refer to Minneapolis. Our school is located between the “many lakes” of our city. Did you know that “Minne or Mni” means water in Dakota and “polis” means city in Greek? Many residents of our city and state are unaware that some commonly used names for places, streets, lakes, and neighborhoods have names that originated with the Dakota.

Although Bde Ota is not a familiar word, it is easy to say. Bde is also becoming more common. Last year Lake Calhoun was given the alternate name – Bde Maka Ska (one of the original names the Dakota people called the lake before European American settlement).

Naming our school Bde Ota would be a chance for us to focus in on the environment and appreciate the beauty this land offers. In Dakota culture, it is more traditional to name a school or place after the landscape around it instead of a person. By highlighting the uniqueness of our many lakes, we are honoring our place on this land that people have enjoyed for many years. Water is an essential part of life and just blocks from our school, the Minnehaha Creek connects our numerous lakes.

Finally, the name Bde Ota would help tell the counter story to that of Alexander Ramsey. For 85 years our school has had a namesake that recognizes the man who helped settle and develop our state. Though we live here today because of this development, it was accomplished at the expense of the Dakota people who were pushed off this land, forced to change their culture and driven onto barren reservations and concentration camps. For the Dakota, Alexander Ramsey represents genocide, broken promises and the attempted destruction of their culture. Naming our school Bde Ota could continue this 85-year educational dialogue around the many facets of history and help recognize the original peoples of this place that Alexander Ramsey tried to “exterminate”.

Go Bde Ota Rhinos?

Rename Ramsey Meeting

To provide feedback on these options, please join us on Tuesday, February 28 at 6:00 pm for dinner, followed by a program at 6:30. All are invited: neighbors, alumni, students, families, historians & community leaders! The event will be held at Ramsey Middle School. Dinner and childcare will be provided.

Come for a presentation by students outlining our top new name choices as submitted and chosen by the Ramsey Middle School community. Then, attendees will participate in small group-listening sessions to discuss their name preferences.

Please spread the word as well as RSVP to Paul Sommers (paul.sommers@mpls.k12.mn.us) or Miss Elissa (elissa.cedarleafdahl@mpls.k12.mn.us) for dinner/childcare.

For more information about our Rename Ramsey efforts, see our website: RenameRMS.weebly.com

Thank you to EVERYONE that has contributed to the Rename Ramsey initiative! – Ed.