

# DESA Name Change Committee Meeting

January 24, 2024

6:20pm - Welcome: Dr. Donald introduction

Attendees:

- Dr. LaTonya Donald (DESA Principal)
- Whitney McGinnis (DCSD School Board Representative District 2),
- Deirdre Pierce (Vice Chair DCSD BOE),
- Dr. Michelle Jones (Area Superintendent),
- Samantha Fitz (DESA Parent),
- Brandy Jackson (DESA parent),
- Marquis Jackson (DESA Parent),
- Jessica Durham (Retired DESA & DCSD BOE),
- Brielle Gordon (DESA PTA VP),
- Dr. Keith Jones (Principal DSA),
- Bianca Hamilton (Former DESA Principal, DCSD Performing Arts Coordinator)
- Josh Stifter (DESA Parent),
- Mattie Varner (DESA Teacher and parent)
- Valerie Brittman (Asst. Principal DESA)
- Danielle Botstein Tamez (DESA parent and former DESA PTA VP)

Overview (Whitney McGinnis):

Policy on how to conduct name change. Purpose behind it is to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to provide feedback & input. Thorough thought process & vetting.

Step 1 (completed): Selecting Committee Members

Step 2: (complete) Scheduling 1st meeting

Policy - have to meet 4 times over 4 month period. Jan, Feb, March, April.

Tasks for this evening - schedule future meetings, at least confirm February meeting date.

One of the meetings has to be publicized to the community

Goal: Have our process completed so BOE can vote on committees' recommendations by May

Requirements: Elect to change name by May BOE meeting so that operations dept can order signs, update around facility, all places where name change will be recognized will want to be completed by August.

Tight timeline but have met with Superintendent and they feel it is reasonable and doable.

Purpose of this meeting: Collect survey results, add to results, brainstorm any new ideas to add to list of possible alternative names for the school. Would like to have another survey of committee members, bw meetings 1-2, to rank top 5.

Second meeting: Goal to narrow down to 3.

Bw 2nd and 3rd meeting - send out community survey, available online, in paper, at DESA & DSA. Community will have about a month to weigh in on choices that the committee has narrowed it down to.

Hopeful by end of 3rd meeting, we can be close to finalizing committee recommendation to board

4th meeting will be logistics - talking about what district will pay for, in terms of name change. Verifying time line. Anything district might not pay for (will go by historically when schools have changed names, what district has paid for), may be role for PTA to raise funds for extras beyond what district covers.

Question - Brielle Gordon, confirming that all the changes will be completed by next school year, starting August 2024.

Dr.Donald: Presentation of survey results. (Recorded on paper board by Dr. Michelle Jones so the committee has a visual representation to refer to during deliberations)

- Samuel O. Williams Performing Arts School
- Tyler Perry School of the Arts
- State of the Arts Preparatory Academy
- John Batiste School of the Arts
- Dekalb Academy of the Arts (x4)
- Dekalb Creative and Performing Arts Academy
- Norma Rushing Arts Academy (x2)
- John Lewis School of Good Trouble
- Avondale School of the Arts (shared but policy is to not give a city in case school relocates, so this will not be considered)
- Cory Barksdale School of the Arts
- Dekalb Academy of Excellence
- Academy of Arts and Excellence
- Dekalb Excelsior School of the Arts
- Renaissance School of the Arts
- Dekalb Arts Academy
- Donald Glover Arts Academy
- Dekalb Academy of Fine Arts
- Dekalb School of Visual and Performing Arts
- Dekalb School for the Arts Excellence

Additional suggestions from the floor:

- Dekalb Youth School of the Arts (Michelle Jones)

(Question(Brandy Jackson) - how far along are we towards STEAM certification - Dr. Donald stated that we are on track to be certified by May, so Dekalb STEAM Academy was suggested, however, it was decided that the STEAM certification will be part of the tag line, not in the school name)

Background on Names of people suggested:

- Samuel O. Williams - first African American to teach art in Dekalb schools, was over the first arts program in Dekalb. He is living. Several committee members know him and gave praises.
- John Batiste - an artist, composer for the orchestra. One of the first African American composers
- Cory Barksdale - local visual artist
- Question about if people are living or deceased
  - Mrs. McGinnis describes procedure:
    - General rule: We don't name schools after living individuals. Not outright prohibition but will require special approval.
    - If living family, or if they are alive, they have to give consent to want to have the school named after them. If they decline, then name is off the list.
    - As district, want to avoid controversy, so if we decide to move forward naming the school after an individual, we need to feel confident in that person's record, their character, additional levels of scrutiny.
    - Since we are on a time line, we want this to be in effect in August, so logistically having to get additional approvals, will push back timeline. If we feel very strongly, it may be worth pushing back a semester
- Norma Rushing - alive, former principal at this school(Hooper Alexander ES), educator, hired Dr. Donald over 20 years ago.

Any we need to X out right away?

- Avondale School of the Arts, policy as magnet school, can't name after city
- John Lewis - already have schools after him
- Proposal to nix names of living people
  - It takes 2 extra steps
  - Show of hands, majority agrees to nix living people from the list
- Proposal to take all people names off the list
  - Show of hands, majority agrees to nix all people names off list
- Academy of Excellence, doesn't have the word Arts in it.
  - Show of hands, majority agrees to nix
- Put up for discussion; some are "Arts", "Performing", "Fine", "Visual".
  - Discussion: Arts is a broad term and we could change the variety of what we could offer. "The Arts" would be the best terminology.
  - Continue to vote on nixing names that are specific arts
- Proposal to nix:
  - Dekalb School of Visual and Performing Arts
    - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
  - Dekalb Creative and Performing Arts Academy
    - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
  - Dekalb Academy of Fine Arts
    - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
  - State of the Arts Preparatory Academy

- Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
- Dekalb Excelsior School of the Arts
  - Discussion, what does Excelsior mean, do we want to keep the acronym DESA, we need to come up with another E word.
  - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
- Renaissance School of the Arts
  - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
- Academy of Arts & Excellence
  - Discussion - is it too long, character limit? Doesn't say Dekalb. Does "Excellence" hold us to a higher standard (if HVAC isn't excellent for example)
  - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
- Discussion: McGinnis recommendation to leave current name as choice
  - Some K-8 leave "elementary" in the name
  - Eliminating "elementary" and adding "middle" opens up to additional funding. Teachers need funding for middle school, but get no stipend bc it's elementary. McGinnis says name doesn't impact funding.
- Dekalb Youth School of the Arts
  - Hand raise vote - majority to eliminate
- At this point, we are down to 3, so we have our February meeting goal.
  - Dekalb Academy of the Arts
  - Dekalb Arts Academy
  - 
  - Add to "E" list
    - Exceptional, Exemplary, Exquisite,
    - Discussion - do we not want to use Excellence? We need to find an E with "kick".
    - Esteemed - "notch above", "selective" - auditions. Too much explaining?
    - Engaged
    - Excellent
    - Enthusiastic
  - Are we proposing any new names?
    - Discussion: Low vote to remove "Excellence" option.
    - Motion to reinstate "Academy of Arts & Excellence", but say "Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence"
    -
  - Suggestion from McGinnis
    - On community survey - Yes/no question - do you want to change the name. If yes, then vote on new one.
    - We need to have 3 options to avoid a split vote bw 2 similar names - Dekalb Arts Academy / Dekalb Academy of the Arts
    - Discussion: Can we have "K-8" in the name?

- Suggestions: “Primary” is an international term. “Intermediate”
- New suggestion: Dekalb K-8 School of the Arts
  - Hand raise vote to add - Not a majority
- New suggestion: Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts
  - Hand raise vote to add - Majority to Add
  - Discussion - provides a 3rd option
- Vote to choose 3rd option - between Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts and Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence. Discussion: What about DESA (vote on hold because we want to vote on a favorite E for DESA)
- Discussion and suggestions -
  - Dekalb Expressive School of the Arts
  - Dekalb School of Expressive Arts?
  - Dekalb Preparatory School of the Arts
- Vote on DESA - E words (Hand Raise - vote once)
  - Academy of Arts & Excellence - 6
  - Dekalb Excellent School of the Arts - 0
  - Dekalb Esteemed School of the Arts - 1
  - Dekalb Expressive School of the Arts - 3
  - Dekalb Enthusiastic School of the Arts - 1
- Vote for 3rd option:
  - Academy of Arts & Excellence
    - Discussion, add “Dekalb” in front
    - Hand raise vote to add - Majority wants to add
  - Choices are:
    - Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence
    - Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts
  - Discussion - why should we narrow these down? Can we have 4 on the ballot?
    - Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence is so close to Dekalb Academy of the Arts.
- Proposal: 4 on the table, eliminate least favorite (hand raise vote)
  - Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence - 4 least favorite
  - Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts - 1 least favorite
  - Dekalb Academy of the Arts - 0
  - Dekalb Arts Academy - 7 least favorite
- 3 names - Final to send to BOE:
  - Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence
  - Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts
  - Dekalb Academy of the Arts
- Discussion: For the survey, should we give an option for a write in?
  - Time limits, we shouldn't give that option
- Schedule next meeting
  - February 27, 6pm - should we do hybrid, in person, or zoom?

- Vote for zoom or in person
  - hand raise majority for zoom
- PTA has paid account we can use for Zoom
- Teams option - district uses it
- Vote between Zoom or Teams
  - Zoom has majority
- Schedule future Meetings:
  - March 26 - McGinnis can't be here, so can we meet March 27?
    - Everyone agrees we can meet on March 27 on Zoom
  - March 27, 6pm - 3rd meeting date, zoom
  - April 9, 6pm - final meeting date, in person to wrap it up
- Meeting adjourned 7:31pm

Summary:

3 names we are sending to the BOE:

- Dekalb Academy of Arts & Excellence
- Dekalb Magnet School of the Arts
- Dekalb Academy of the Arts

Future Meeting Dates:

- February 27, 6pm, Zoom
- March 27, 6pm, Zoom
- April 9, 6pm, In person at DESA