



March 5, 2021

Interim Superintendent Lathan,

In June 2020, Princeton University's board of trustees voted to remove Woodrow Wilson's name from the School of Public and International Affairs and Wilson College. Wilson served as the 13th president of Princeton University. The trustees concluded that "Woodrow Wilson's racist thinking and policies made him an inappropriate namesake for a school or college whose scholars, students, and alumni must stand firmly against racism in all its forms".

This decision came at a time when calls for racial justice and a heightened examination of biases were being brought to the forefront in part by George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis in May of 2020.

Woodrow Wilson served as the 28th president of the United States from 1913 to 1921. Research indicates that:

- Woodrow Wilson's racism was significant and consequential even by the standards of his own time.
- Woodrow Wilson segregated the federal civil service after it had been racially integrated for decades, thereby taking America backward in its pursuit of justice.
- Woodrow Wilson allowed Jim Crow laws to be put into place in Washington, D.C.
- As the 13<sup>th</sup> president of Princeton, Woodrow Wilson discouraged Black applicants from applying to Princeton.

In September, our School-Based Decision-Making Committee (SDMC) held a specially called meeting to hear from the community regarding our namesake. After hearing from parents and community members, the SDMC voted unanimously to move forward with exploring the process of reviewing and considering a name change for our school.

A commitment to basic human rights such as freedom, dignity, safety, equitable treatment, and a standard of living adequate for health and well-being drive the Montessori commitment to education for peace and social justice. By creating respectful, inclusive classrooms, celebrating diversity in all its forms, crossing cultural boundaries, and modeling engaged citizenry, Montessori educators nurture students who will transform the world and make it a better place for their generation and the generations that follow.

The HISD School Board Policy (CW (Local), states that school names “must respect cultural differences and values”. The board policy was approved in 2016 as part of a national movement to rename schools and remove symbols that are considered by some to be pro-slavery. In reading that policy, our school name does meet the criteria to be changed.

In accordance with the Houston ISD School Board Policy related to naming or renaming campus facilities (CW (Local), the principal has convened a re-naming committee. The committee is now seeking approval from the Superintendent of Schools to proceed with the re-naming process. If approved, the committee will explore school renaming options that follow board guidelines and submit recommendations to school board trustees by May.

Thank you for your consideration,

*John Eckelkamp, Teacher*

*Dr. Belva Parrish, School Counselor*

*Sarah Fischer, Parent Teacher Organization*

*Randi Blair, Parent*

*Helen Repass, Student*

*Aedan Flores, Student*

*Kayden Schumacher, Student*

*Flora Moon, Local Civic Leader (Director of Friends of Cherryhurst Park)*

*Heather Trachtenberg, Local Civic Leader*

Woodrow Wilson Montessori School (PK-8)  
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Houston Independent School District

*Michael Gomez, Local Civic Leader*

*Ruby Shampine, Alumni Representative*

*Jesus Azuara, Alumni Representative*

*Angela Borzon, Montessori Advocate*

*Christine Soderstrom, Friends of Montessori Representative*

*Anika Rikondja, Anti-Bias, Anti-Racist (ABAR) Committee*

*Shameika Sykes-Salvador, Principal*

*Dr. Amy Poerschke, School Support Officer*

*Cesar Martinez, Area Superintendent, Northwest Area School Office*