

From: Anne-Marie Leake

Sent: Thursday, July 09, 2015 11:09 AM

To: schoolboard; Patrick C. Kinlaw (pckinlaw); Cheryl L. Guempel (clguempel); Andrew J. Jenks (ajenks)

Subject: Renaming Harry Flood Byrd Middle School

Dear Henrico County School Board Members and HCPS Administrators:

It is time to rename Harry Flood Byrd Middle School.

The HCPS Strategic Plan incorporates a statement of beliefs, including:

- Intolerance of discrimination
- A school community grounded in respect and integrity
- Accountability
- Understanding and respecting diversity for the enrichment of the individual and community
- Continuous improvement to meet and exceed the challenges of a changing environment

The environment has changed dramatically since this school was built 44 years ago and named in honor of a **highly-vocal White Supremacist and leader of the Massive Resistance campaign against the desegregation of schools**. The days of publicly honoring those who fought vigorously to deny rights to our citizens are over. We can no longer in good conscience and faith profess to adhere to a statement of beliefs, while at the same time continuing to honor someone who so forcefully worked against those very beliefs. The hypocrisy to which the students of Byrd Middle School, and the community at large, are being subjected is shameful.

HCPS has a tremendous opportunity here to involve students in the renaming process, thereby fulfilling its mission of “engaging our students in diverse educational, social, and civic learning experiences that inspire and empower them to become contributing citizens.” As the sixth-largest public school division in the Commonwealth, and one that aspires to be “an innovative leader in educational excellence” and “the PREMIER school division in the United States,” it is time to put beliefs into action and set an example for our students, our community, and our nation.

What is the procedure required for renaming a school, and how do we get that process started now? While community and student body input will no doubt be solicited as part of the name selection process, I will kick off the dialogue by suggesting the following possible alternatives:

- **Quioccasin Middle School**, honoring the very roots of Henrico County’s 400+ year history, and reinstating the name of the five-room school built on that road in 1932.
- **Robert R. Merhige, Jr. Middle School**, honoring the longtime judge of the United States District Court who enforced *Brown v. Board of Education* locally when the United States Supreme Court sent the school desegregation cases back down to the lower courts for enforcement.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anne-Marie J. Leake