

# School names to honor diverse group

## Andrew Langston, Ida B. Wells among namesakes

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The Rochester school board Tuesday will vote on seven new school names, including honors for the city's first Black educator, its first Black female superintendent and a founding family in the lo-

cal Puerto Rican community.

Five of the schools are opening new in the fall as part of the district-wide re-configuration.

- **Loretta Johnson Middle School** will be at the former Madison High School and Wilson Foundation Academy location on Genesee Street. Johnson was a longtime district administrator who served as interim superintendent in 1994-95, the first Black woman to hold that post. She died in 2017.

- **Thurgood Marshall Middle**

**School** will be at the Charlotte campus. Rochester's first Marshall school was named after John Marshall, the 19th-century U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice. This one will be named after the first Black Supreme Court justice.

- **Dr. Freddie Thomas Middle School** re-asserts the existing building name at 625 Scio St. A middle school opened there in 1995 under the name of the Freddie Thomas Learning Center, but it closed in 2005. It's been informally called the Freddie Thomas campus

since then. Thomas was an inventor and biologist at the University of Rochester.

- **Andrew A. Langston Middle School** will be at the Jefferson campus at Edgerton Park. Langston was the founder of WDKX-FM, one of the most successful Black-run radio stations in the country.

- **Padilla High School** will replace Franklin High School. Ramon Padilla came to Rochester from Puerto Rico in

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# School names

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1947 and helped acclimate and organize those who followed in his footsteps in the decades to come. Among his 11 children was Nancy Padilla, who served as Rochester school board president in the 1980s. It is the second school in Rochester named for a Hispanic person, following Roberto Clemente School 8. "I'm just

in awe; I don't know what to say," said another of Ramon Padilla's daughters, Nydia Padilla-Rodriguez. She is founder of Borinquen Dance Theatre and a longtime RCSD administrator.

The district is also renaming two existing schools.

● **Ida B. Wells-Barnett Elementary School 34** is the new name for the school on Lexington Avenue, replacing the name of Louis Cerulli. Wells-Barnett was a pioneering Black journalist who investigated and exposed lynchings at

great personal risk. Cerulli, president of the Rochester school board in the 1960s, was the leading opponent of efforts to integrate the city's schools.

● **Austin Steward Elementary School 46** is the new name for the school on Newcastle Road, replacing the name of Charles Carroll. Steward was the first prominent Black resident of Rochester and opened the first school for Black children in 1818. Carroll, one of Rochester's three founders, held scores of Black people in slavery.

Last September the board approved renaming School 16 on Post Avenue after David and Ruth Anderson, longtime Black educators and storytellers.

— *Justin Murphy is a veteran reporter at the Democrat and Chronicle and author of "Your Children Are Very Greatly in Danger: School Segregation in Rochester, New York." Follow him on Twitter at [twitter.com/CitizenMurphy](https://twitter.com/CitizenMurphy) or contact him at [jmurphy7@gannett.com](mailto:jmurphy7@gannett.com).*