

School no. 3 renamed for RCSD's first Black principal

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When Alice Holloway Young was 4 years old, her family moved across state lines from Virginia to North Carolina. Her home state did not have a school for Black children, and North Carolina did.

To ensure their children received an education, Young's parents packed up everything they owned, sold their farm and moved the family.

And 94 years later, on her 98th birthday, Alice Young recounted this story as she stood outside of the school that now bears her name.

On Wednesday at a ceremony attended by Young and other city leaders, RCSD's School No. 3 was officially renamed the Dr. Alice Holloway Young School of Excellence.

Changing the Name

For decades, including when Young was a teacher there, School No. 3 was known as Nathaniel Rochester Middle School.

However, community members circulated a petition to rename the school because Nathaniel Rochester enslaved African people, owning them as his property.

"Nathaniel Rochester was born in Virginia in 1752 and held at least 11 people in slavery there," the *Democrat and Chronicle* reported. "The wealth he and other Southern speculators attained through the slave trade is what enabled them to purchase the land that would become metropolitan Rochester ... Even after he moved to New York he continued to hold people in slavery. In some cases he emancipated them and then immediately signed them to long-term contracts for unpaid indentured servitude, documents show."

Community members had called for the renaming of the school for years. But the change came from the petition, which was created after 2020, a year during which many organizations and state or federal officials made attempts to reckon with racist histories.

In Rochester, that looked like renaming School no. 12 after Anna Murray Douglass, and the Greater Rochester International Airport for Frederick Douglass.

Many buildings in the city continue to be named for enslavers, including RCSD School no. 46 and Charles Carroll Park, both of which are named for a man who enslaved dozens of people before moving from Maryland to Genesee County.

Other buildings, like Rochester Institute of Technology's Nathaniel Rochester Hall continue to bear the name of the city's namesake. But, as of Sept. 29, School no. 3 is no longer one of those buildings.

The former namesake of the school has been replaced by a fellow native Virginian who is the female descendant of enslaved Black people.

A community celebration

Local leaders and community members, including RCSD's superintendent Dr. Lesli Myers-Small, Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren and members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Young's sorority, were at the dedication.

“Your name replaces a history of inequity and inequality in our community,” Myers-Small said. “Your name becomes the pride of our district, as we work to provide each scholar with a high-quality education.”



Dr. Alice Holloway Young receives flowers and other gifts at the dedication ceremony. PHOTO BY ADRIA R. WALKER

Young

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People spoke about Young’s influence and how, by virtue of her tireless work as an educator, she inspired and motivated them.

“When you grace these halls, never forget whose shoulders you stand on,” Warren said to a group of onlooking students. “She paced the way and she fought so that you will have no excuses. You can become anything that you want to become.”

Young was one of the first Black teachers in RCSD. She began, after moving North to further her education, as a substitute teacher at School no. 9. She was the only Black reading specialist in RCSD. When she took the job as vice principal for instruction at School no. 19, Young became the first Black vice principal in the district.

She became the first Black principal in RCSD when she was assigned to School 24, where she worked for three years. Young was RCSD’s first Title I Director, and she supervised federal desegregation funding, including that for the Urban Suburban Program, which still exists.

“While completing her doctoral research, Young found that parents, regardless of race, only wanted the best education for their children,” the *Democrat and Chronicle* reported in March. “Integration of schools was a way to achieve that.”

“My research indicated that both groups of parents in the study, Black parents and white parents, wanted virtually the same thing for their children: they wanted the best education opportunities for their children no matter where the school was,” Young said. “Integration was a sideline. If they did, fine, if they didn’t. That was not their main purpose. The main purpose was for the very best opportunities for their children to get an education.”

Young joined RCSD’s central office as administrative director of the elementary school in 1971. When she retired from RCSD in 1985, Young became a supervising director of elementary instruction.

She is a founding trustee of the board of the Monroe Community College, and she served as its chair for two decades, from 1978 to 1998.

At the dedication ceremony, those gathered sang both versions of “Happy Birthday” to Young. Mayor Lovely Warren presented her with a key to the city, and School no. 3’s principal presented her with flowers, a card

signed by the students, and other gifts.

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Dr. Alice Holloway Young and others cut the ribbon, officially renaming the school Dr. Alice Holloway Young School of Excellence.



Mayor Lovely Warren presents Dr. Young with a key to the city.

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