



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent

The Public Schools of Brookline
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Dear Members of the Brookline Community,

I am pleased to announce the official call for nominations for the new permanent name for the Coolidge Corner School. Nominations can be submitted using an online form available [here](#). Paper nomination forms will also be available in the main office of each school, at the three branches of the Brookline Public Library, at the central office of the school department on the 5th floor of Brookline Town Hall, and in the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, 11 Pierce Street (Public Health Building). Nominations will be accepted through Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at 5:00pm.

In May, 2018, Brookline Town Meeting voted, 171 to 19, to change the name of the Edward Devotion School. Town Meeting approved The Coolidge Corner School as the temporary name for the school and initiated a process to identify a permanent name. While the name of the school has changed, the school remains the same vibrant and inclusive community where families and educators are deeply committed to the success of every student.

We ask our students to form a deep connection to their school: to root for their sports teams, to wear the school's name on their clothes, and to take pride in representing the school to the larger community. The name of the school is the symbol of this pride and should represent the spirit, virtues, and values of the community. Historical records confirm that Edward Devotion was a slaveholder. We could no longer ask our students to take pride in the school's name knowing it was named for a person who held another human in bondage. According to Hidden Brookline, one-fourth of Brookline households in the 18th century held enslaved people; Edward Devotion was one of them. Yet, other town residents opposed slavery and actively worked to abolish it. They upheld the dignity of every human. Having moved away from honoring Edward Devotion, our community now has the chance to choose an individual worthy of having the school named for them.

The opportunity to rename the former Devotion School is another step in the Town of Brookline's continuing efforts to recognize the strength of its diversity and the contributions of people of color to the town's history. Since 2006, when the [Hidden Brookline Committee](#) was established, community members have been working to better understand and bring to light the history of slavery and freedom in Brookline. In 2012, Hidden Brookline's work led to Town Meeting's passing a warrant article called "A Resolution Regarding Slavery in Brookline" that acknowledged the history of slavery in Brookline and pledged "vigilance against all practices and institutions that dehumanize and discriminate against people." Also as a result of Hidden Brookline's work, the Public Schools of Brookline 3rd grade social studies curriculum contains a unit about slavery in Brookline that includes the history of Edward Devotion's role as a slaveholder. More recently, in 2017, the Town entered into a compact with the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) (GARE). This compact commits the Town to strive toward racial equity in all facets of its operations and policies and to work with community partners to reduce racism in all of its forms. The renaming process of the former Devotion School is yet another step in this important process.

Since our schools belong to our students, the process to select a new name honors their role. A Nominations Committee comprised of 18 students, including 14 current Coolidge Corner Students and 4 current Brookline High School students who are Devotion School alumni, has been formed. The

Nominations Committee will review all of the nominations submitted by the members of the public and is responsible for bringing forward 5 names to be considered further by the School Committee. Details about the Nominations Committee's process and timeline can be found [here](#). Additional details about the application and selection process for the Nominations Committee can be found [here](#).

While students will take a significant role as part of the Nominations Committee, adults will continue to be a major and necessary part of the process by submitting nominations, providing input through public meetings and hearings, and participating in Town Meeting. Additionally, the Nominations Committee will host a Renaming Night in April, 2019. Information about the semi-finalist school names will be presented during Renaming Night and members of the public will vote on their preferred name.

Parallel to the student-led Nominations Committee work, and with the support of the Brookline Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, a town-wide advisory group - the Renaming Advisory Committee - is planning outreach and educational events for the entire community. Brookline teachers are developing a curriculum about the renaming process to be incorporated within the District's broader commitment to anti-racism, equity and restorative practices.

The Brookline School Committee will ultimately submit a recommended name to the Town of Brookline Naming Committee, which will, in turn, submit a recommendation to Town Meeting. The Naming Committee considers several criteria when acting on a proposal to name or rename a public building:

- A person/organization of excellent reputation and character who/which has set an example of outstanding citizenship and/or has made an exemplary contribution of time, service, or resources to or on behalf of the community
- A national noteworthy public figure or official
- An event of historical or cultural significance
- A significant donation or bequest, establishment of a trust, or other similar action

Brookline Town Meeting has final authority to change the school's name.

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) will provide regular updates throughout this exciting and important process. You can also find more information about the renaming process on the PSB website: www.brookline.k12.ma.us.

Our town has a historic opportunity to come together and, through a collaborative process, right an injustice that has been overlooked far too long.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott
Superintendent