



# Jefferson School Renaming Recommendation

December 9, 2020

Brent Stephens, Superintendent  
Natasha Beery, Director of BSEP & Community Relations  
grace kong, Naming Advisory Committee Facilitator

# This Evening's Agenda

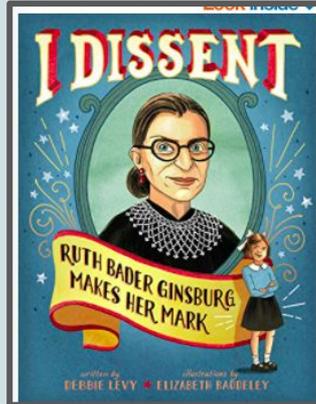
1. **Brief Review** of Renaming Timeline & Process
2. **Summary of Input** on Top Seven Names
3. **Committee Recommendation:** Ruth Acty Elementary School
4. **Implementation Steps** and Carrying the Learning Forward
5. **Board Discussion** and Decision

# Facilities Naming Process BP/AR 7310

Steps	Timeline
1. Resolution to Begin Renaming Process	June 10, 2020
2. Town Halls with Staff and Parent/Guardians	June 22/23 2020
3. Board Action to Discontinue Jefferson & Washington	July 1, 2020
4. <i>Jefferson</i> Advisory Committee Groundwork	Aug 2020
5. <i>Jefferson</i> School Community Meetings	Sept-Nov 2020
6. <i>Jefferson</i> Engagement on Top Choices	Oct-Nov 2020
7. <i>Jefferson</i> Recommendation to Board	Dec 9, 2020
8. <i>Jefferson</i> Name Change and Celebration	2021
9. <i>Washington</i> Renaming Process Begins	2021

# Seven Names for Inspiring Classroom Learning

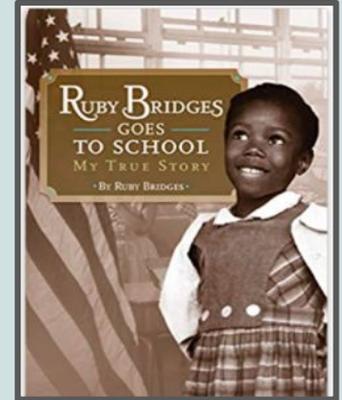
Ruth Bader Ginsburg



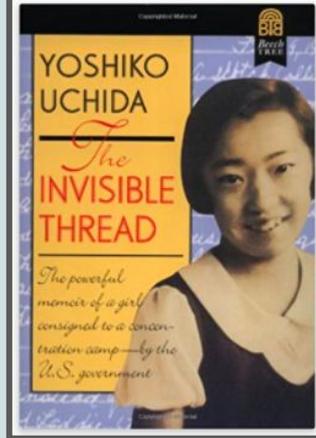
Ruth Acty



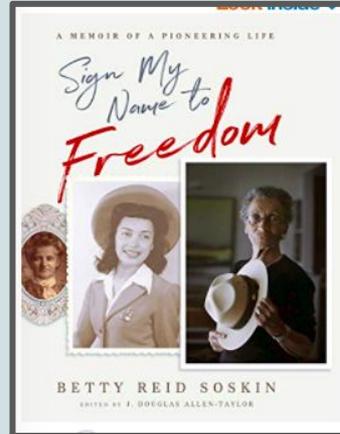
Ruby Bridges



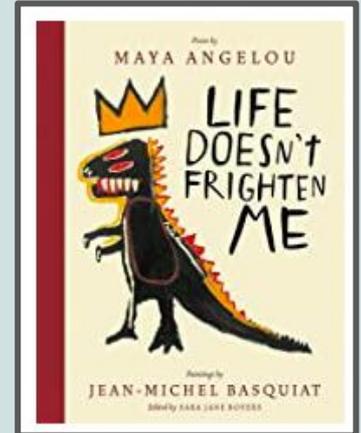
Muwekma Ohlone



Yoshiko Uchida



Betty Reid Soskin



Maya Angelou

# Excitement about Choices

group	1st	2nd	3rd
TK-3	Acty	Bridges	Muwekma
4-5	Muwekma	RBG	Acty
Staff	Acty - Angelou - Muwেকma		
Parents overall	Muwekma	Acty	Bridges

my kids had a hard time choosing, as they learned more they were inspired!

**Ruth Acty** - local, breaking barriers, educator, inspirational!

I love all the choices, but in the spirit of Black Joy and as an antidote to Jefferson I think **Ruby Bridges** or **Ruth Acty** would be really powerful

Whether its named **Ohlone** or not, I hope we continue learning from them, and continuing relations

**Yoshiko Uchida** - makes visible a part of US history that is often ignored

Kudos to process - don't want to lose what we've learned, especially the **local history**



Superintendent's  
Naming Advisory Committee  
Recommendation:

Ruth Acty  
Elementary School



Ruth Acty always wanted to be a teacher



Born in 1913 in Oakland, Ruth Acty earned a BA in English, Minor in Music from SF State in 1937. She studied early childhood development and speech at UC Berkeley. Despite earning multiple teaching credentials, she could not find a teaching job in 1939. Her parents had both died, she had two younger sisters to worry about, but she persevered, taking a starring role in a play in San Francisco while continuing to search for a teaching job.

## ACTIVITIES AMONG NEGROES

By LENA M. WEISINGER

The Professional and Business Girls Club of the Linden Branch, Y.W.C.A., will hold its Twelfth Annual Easter Breakfast at the Linden Branch Y.W.C.A., 638 Linden Street, this morning. A large number of members and friends have made their reservations. Miss Lela C. Chapman is executive secretary.

Miss Henrietta Bell, business and industrial secretary of the Linden Branch Y.W.C.A., returned to her office Wednesday after a month's absence owing to illness.

### CHURCH SERVICES

Today marks the close of Passion Week, which as usual has been observed by the churches and fraternal groups of the Bay area.

Special programs, prayers, song services and church school programs are prepared for the day's worship, together with public services, where many share a part. On Good Friday union services of the churches (with) newspapers at the churches in large numbers. Special daily prayer services led up to the Friday union service. The Palm Sunday services were well attended.

The Masonic Order of the G.E.H. held their annual service of Alameda County at St. Paul A.M.E. Church, Berkeley. Rev. A. W. Johnson, of Park Chapel, delivered the sermon. The Senior Girls choir, Mrs. Frontier Thomas at the piano, and Mrs. Zelma Williams, accompanied by Miss Maxine Blackburn, furnished the singing. Mrs. Williams sang the "Palm."

This afternoon, from 7 to 8 o'clock, Mrs. Ruth Larzbe, state chairman of Arts and Crafts of Fostered Clubs, will direct a fashion review at the Masonic Hall, 30th and Myrtle Streets. The public is invited.

### PLAY ACCESS

Miss Ruth Acty, who plays the role of Ella Jim's wife, and daughter in the production, is one of the leading stars in "Run Lil' Chillun," now playing at the Alcazar in San Francisco.

In an interview with Miss Acty recently she told her own story:

### ACTRESS



Miss Ruth Acty, a star in "Run Lil' Chillun," now playing in San Francisco. —Joseph photo.

"I majored in speech arts and music while attending the San Francisco State College, with the idea of teaching these subjects in Junior High School. I received an elementary teaching certificate and an A.B. degree from the State on my graduation in December, 1937.

"Since then I have done post-graduate work, both at the State and the University of California, and have received in addition my elementary certificate, a master's school and kindergarten, primary certificate and Junior High School teaching certificate.

school and kindergarten, primary certificate and Junior High School teaching certificate.

"I had set my heart on teaching for I feel that it is my real calling, but my father passed away suddenly last September, leaving my two younger sisters and myself. "I had been expecting a call to teach in El Centro that Fall but somehow it didn't come. I realized I had to find something permanent immediately, but it seemed that every door was closed. The plan came along as a Godsend.

"I've always been interested in the theater but never dreamed I'd have an opportunity to perform.

"Well, just about the time she play had gotten into full swing I received a sudden call from El Centro to work. I was thrilled but didn't know which way to turn. There were matters concerning the house that had to be considered, and the sisters' welfare. So I remained at home, rather disappointed, yet feeling that I had a definite obligation to fulfill.

"I have enjoyed my work in this play and I know that I have gained a wealth of knowledge and practical experience from my participation in "Run Lil' Chillun."

"The role of Ella, which I portray, is a real inspiration. I feel it has helped me to meet situations with more confidence and hope, and with a greater faith."

### FORESTRY PROGRAM

The Federated Act and Industrial Club, of which Mrs. Lillian Wainston is president, held its forestry program at the home of Mrs. Rosina Banks, 847 40th Street, at its last meeting in March.

Mrs. Gertrude Jackson, acting chairman, presented the following program:

"What Do We Plant When We Plant a Tree?", poem by the chairman; "On Trees," reading by Mrs. A. Sprattick; "The Heart of a Tree," recitation by Miss Gabel Brosser; "Trees," reciting by Mrs. Gertrude Jackson; "Lilies," reciting by Mrs. L. Golden. The program was closed with singing the National Negro anthem, "Lift Every Heart and Sing" by the late James Weldon Johnson.

*1939 article in which Acty talked about trying to find a teaching job*

# BOARD GIVES POLICY ON NEGRO TEACHERS

The threatened bombshell over the controversial question of whether Negro teachers shall be employed in the Berkeley public schools failed to explode last night when the Board of Education met and quickly decided the issue.

In a brief statement to the crowd of more than 250 persons who filled the meeting room, Dr. Louise Hector, president of the Board, announced the past policy of the school directors concerning color and creed in the selection of teachers will continue in effect. Following disposal of a number of routine matters, Dr. Hector asserted:

"A number of our citizens and the Superintendent of Schools having requested a definition of policy concerning the employment of persons in the public school system of Berkeley, this Board hereby affirms the right guaranteed all people under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and instructs the superintendent to recommend employees solely with respect to their fitness for the tasks to be performed and without reference to race or creed."

*September 28, 1939, the BUSD Board of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Louise Hector, affirmed teacher hiring without regard to race or creed.*



Ruth Acty applied in 1939, on sub list in 1941-42

*As Berkeley become an increasingly diverse city, and with organized pressure from Black leaders, including Frances Albrier, the School Board was confronted with its hiring practices which so far yielded an all-white teaching force.*

*Ruth Acty was among the highly qualified teachers of color who had applied but were not hired.*

In 1943, Ruth Acty was hired as the first teacher of color.

She was assigned to teach Kindergarten at Longfellow School, where 30% of students were Black.



1943 Kindergarten Teacher - Longfellow/Lincoln - until 1955

1948 Masters from Northwestern (Speech, Arts, Theater)

1955 First Black teacher in BUSD Jr. High (French, Drama, English)

1969 French diploma from Université de Poitiers

1973 Teaches at Berkeley Adult School; UC Extension

1982 Board of Education issues a Resolution of Appreciation

1984 *Looking Back At Berkeley - A Pictorial History of a Diverse City*

1985 Profile in East Bay Times and Berkeley Alumni Association

1986 City of Berkeley proclaims October 5, 1986 "Ruth Acty Day."

1991 CSU-Hayward historian's video entitled "Born to Teach."

1994 Berkeley Historical Society records her oral history

1998 Board of Education posthumous Recognition Resolution

2001 Berkeley Historical Society publishes book about Ruth Acty



*Ruth Acty retired from Berkeley Adult School in 1991 at the age of 78.*

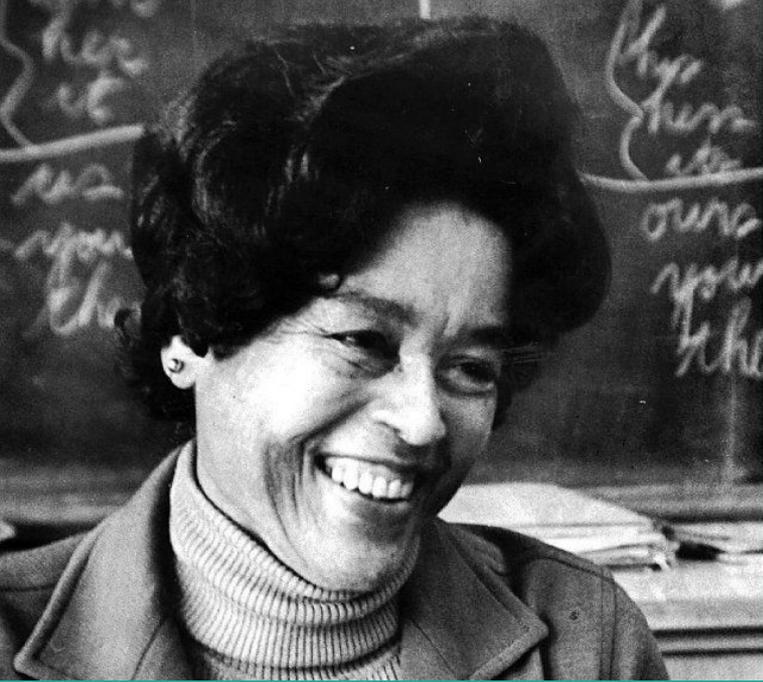
*(photos: Berkeley Historical Society)*

**“Miss Ruth Acty’s significance in the history of the Bay Area is unparalleled... She represents the best in excellence, elegance, refinement, commitment, determination, perseverance and persistence. She was a superior mentor and role model for planning and reaching goals, despite the odds.”**

-Robert Haynes, senior curator for the African American Museum and Library, Oakland

# Criteria for Name Selection and Discussions

- ❑ **INSPIRING:** meaningful, especially to school children
- ❑ **ENDURING:** likely to stand the test of time
- ❑ **LOCAL CONNECTION:** ties to our community, history, or BUSD
- ❑ **OUR VALUES:** community, inclusion, social justice, diversity, etc.
- ❑ **UNDER-REPRESENTED:** not a common type of BUSD school name
- ❑ **UNIQUE:** not already widely known or used elsewhere
- ❑ **EDUCATIONAL:** exemplifies right to excellent public education.



Naming Advisory Committee  
Recommendation:

# Ruth Acty Elementary School

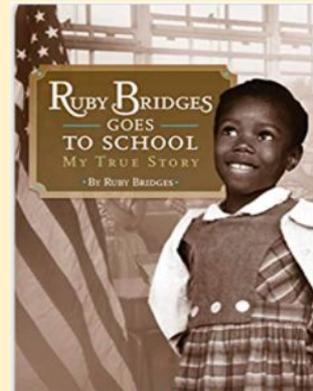
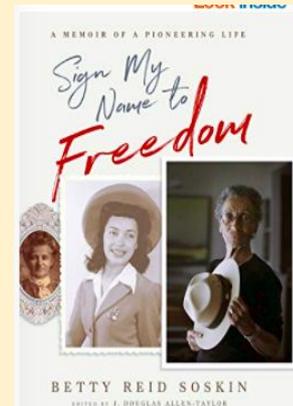
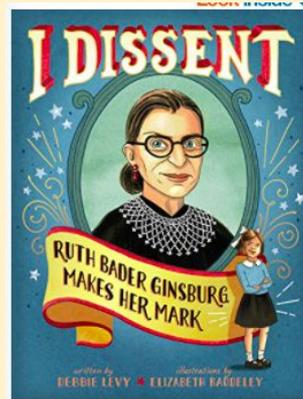
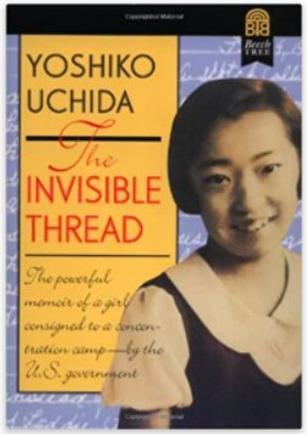
**"A tenacious, committed, dedicated, caring and loving educator,  
trailblazer and history maker."**

*Celebrating and Appreciating Miss Ruth Acty, a Model of Excellence, 1998*

# Carrying the Learning Forward

- ★ **Local Heroes** Curriculum & Displays
- ★ **Mural** at the School?
- ★ **Sequoia Hall**
- ★ Engage with **Tribal Representatives**

*We can expand narratives in our school...we can integrate these histories!*



# Implementation Steps

- **Official Change:** California Department of Education
- **Facilities:** New Signage
- **BUSD Departments and Systems**
- **District and School Media**
- **Berkeley City and Community Notification**
- **Celebration!**

# Questions for Board Discussion

1. Does the Board approve the recommendation of the name **“Ruth Acty Elementary School”**?
2. Does the Board approve the recommendation of the name **“Sequoia Hall”** at the school to honor the 2003-05 history?
3. Should Staff eventually continue engagement with tribal representatives regarding indigenous representation in curriculum and our schools?

# Thank You!

*Naming Advisory Committee:*

*Angela Reed, Arun Khanna, Deminika Spears, Joy Chua, Nick Williams, Orville Jackson, Rick Kleine*

*Top Name Slideshow Teachers:*

*Angela Reed, Ariel Wittman, Barb Wenger, Lisa Rossi, Rachel Kadner, Rick Kleine, Nick Williams*

*All the students who participated; everyone who attended PTA and Village meetings, town halls, webinars and board meetings in 2020; everyone who suggested names for consideration; Advocates for name change from 2003-2005 and from 2018. Sylvia Mendez community.*

*To quote Ruth Acty: "There Will be a Way, Keep Going, Do Not Give Up!"*

# School Board Resolution

*Resolution No. 20-064 in support of Black Lives Matter - June 10, 2020*

RESOLVED, that the **Berkeley Unified School Board hereby commits to a renaming process for Jefferson and Washington Elementary Schools, in accordance with our policy** and in recognition of the fact that Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and a Framers of the Constitution, was nonetheless an unrepentant slaveholder whose wealth was built on the labor of the enslaved, and who withheld his espoused values of liberty and equality from the hundreds of people of African descent he held and sold into bondage, whose descendants continue to suffer unbearable injustices in a country that has yet to live up to the promises of the Constitution...

# BUSD School Names 1878-2020

**1920**

Berkeley High, *Burbank*, *Columbus*, *Edison*, Emerson, Franklin, *Garfield*, *Hawthorne*, *Hillside*, Jefferson, John Muir, *Le Conte*, Lincoln, Longfellow, *McKinley*, Oxford, *University*. Washington, Whittier, Willard

**2020**

Berkeley Adult School, Berkeley Technology Academy, Berkeley High, Berkeley Arts Magnet at Whittier, Cragmont, Emerson, Franklin-King-Hopkins CDC, *Jefferson*, John Muir, ML King, Longfellow, Malcolm X, Oxford, Rosa Parks, Sylvia Mendez, Thousand Oaks, *Washington*, Willard

In **1920**, many **location-based school names** (Dwight Way, San Pablo, Rose Street, Seventh Street) gave way to names honoring Americans of note, as Berkeley established itself as a university town and as possible state capital (1908), with names honoring **historical figures, intellectuals, poets, inventors, naturalists, abolitionists. presidents.** Shortly after the first woman was elected to the school board in 1909, a school was first named for a woman (Frances E. Willard).

In **2020**, of the 21 school names, 7 are place names, 13 honor people, of whom 3 are women (Mendez, Parks, Willard) and 4 are people of color, and the names of two assassinated presidents (Garfield, Lincoln) were eventually replaced by two assassinated civil rights leaders (ML King, Malcolm X).

# Berkeley Public Schools History

	1870-1880	1890's	1900's	1910's	1920's
Schools Opened	Kellogg, San Pablo, Seventh Street	Columbus, LeConte, Longfellow, Whittier, Berkeley High Dwight, Rose Street	Hillside, Emerson, Jefferson, Washington	Oxford, Garfield, Willard, Edison, Luther Burbank, John Muir	Thousand Oaks, Cragmont
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed		<del>Kellogg</del> Lorin > Lincoln	Dwight > McKinley, Rose St > Jefferson San Pablo > Franklin Grayson > Hawthorne Seventh Street closed	Evening (adult) schools open	Hillside school burns/rebuilt
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	UC moves to Berkeley; Berkeley Post Office; Berkeley Branch Line	Women's Congress; Berkeley Prohibition	Charter amendment > women vote/run for school board; 1909 Eleanor Carlisle first woman elected to board	WWI	19 <sup>th</sup> amendment 1923 Fire
Berkeley census		5,101	13,214	40,434	56,036

# Berkeley Public Schools History

	1930's	1940's	1950's	1960's	1970's
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed	<del>Edison</del> Hawthorne		McKinley > Continuation School	<del>Burbank</del> Garfield > MLK King Jr	<del>Tilden</del> Lincoln > Malcolm X
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	Great Depression	Ruth Acty, first AA school teacher; WWII; Kaiser shipyards; Japanese imprisonment	School Board votes 3-2 to allow Paul Robeson to perform at Berkeley Community Theatre; Berkeley Report on Segregation	Rev. Roy Nichols, first AA elected to school board; BUSD integration bussing; Free Speech movement; Vietnam War	Gene Roh, first Korean-American to board; now majority non-white; Jeanne Rucker first AA woman president; Prop 13
Demographics		94% white 4% black 2% other	85% white 12% black 4% other	74% white 20% black 7% other	68% white 24% black 10% other
Berkeley census	82,109	85,947	113,805	111,268	116,716

# Berkeley Public Schools History

	1980's	1990's	2000's	2010's
Schools Renamed, Repurposed, Closed	<del>Hillside</del> East Campus > Berkeley Alternative; Whittier > Arts Magnet	Berkeley Alternative > Berkeley Technology Academy; <i>Le Conte, Washington, MX, Longfellow are Magnets</i>	Columbus > Rosa Parks Magnet Board votes against renaming Jefferson	Le Conte petition to review school name begins process which leads to Sylvia Mendez
Berkeley Events; Educational Milestones	Population decreases rising housing costs, loss of industries; Rent control; First BSEP Measure 1986.	Bonds funds improve facilities; School zones and lottery system to improve diversity; Second BSEP passes, Gentrification of historically black neighborhoods	BSEP measures 2004 and 2006, Great recession 2007; decreased school funding; UC admits more out of state, international students	Two-Way Immersion (Spanish/English) at Le Conte; LCFF funding, BSEP Measure E1; 2016 election followed by demonstrations
Demographics	67% white 20% black 13% other	62% white 19% black 19% other	59% white 14% black 27% other [includes 2+ races]	60% white 10% black 31% other [includes 2+ races]
Berkeley census	103,328	102,724	102,743	112,580