




STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

September 16, 2021

TO: The Honorable Bruce Voss
Chairperson, Finance and Infrastructure Committee

FROM: Keith T. Hayashi 
Interim Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Committee Action on Recommendation to Rename the School
Currently Known as Central Middle School to Princess Ruth
Ke'elikōlani Middle School**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) is recommending that the Hawaii State Board of Education (Board) grants the request of Principal Joseph Passantino and the Central Middle School community by approving the change in school name from Central Middle School to Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School pursuant to Board Policy 301-8, Naming of Schools and School Facilities (Attachment A).

2. BACKGROUND

Central Middle School's leadership and community commenced an initiative in January 2019 to change the name of the school to honor Princess Ruth Luka Keanolani Kanāhoahoa Ke'elikōlani, whose home Keōua Hale once stood on the grounds of the current school campus.

Upon her death in 1883, Princess Ruth's property, including Keōua Hale, was bequeathed to Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop. After Princess Pauahi's death in 1885, the Board of Education purchased the Keōua Hale property for what was to become Honolulu High School in 1895. When Honolulu High School vacated the property in 1907, the property became Central Grammar School. Efforts were then made to rename Central Grammar School to Ke'elikōlani School. However, due to the difficulty some had in pronouncing Ke'elikōlani, the school reverted back to Central Grammar School. Central Grammar School became Central Junior High School in 1928, Central Intermediate School in 1932, and Central Middle School in 1997. The buildings on the Central Middle School campus were placed on the Hawaii Register of Historic Places in 1994. To this day, a building on campus still displays the name Ke'elikōlani School.

3. DISCUSSION

Board Policy 301-8, Naming of Schools and School Facilities, states:

“The name of a school shall be recommended by the Superintendent of Education. The recommendation, with its supporting reasons, shall be submitted to the Board of Education for approval.

The name of a school shall be a unique identifier to promote and represent a school’s location or identity.

A school named after a personage shall use the personage’s formal title and full name as the official name of the school.”

The Central Middle School ‘ohana requests a name change of the school to Princess Ruth Ke‘elikōlani Middle School. This proposal is the result of a roughly 2½-year endeavor to acknowledge and celebrate the school’s proud history and profound connection to one of Hawaii’s cherished ali‘i, which is a noble undertaking.

This change will rightfully honor Princess Ruth Luka Keanolani Kanāhoahoa Ke‘elikōlani and her tremendous legacy to Hawai‘i and its people. This change better establishes the school’s rich history as the foundation for student success and pride for generations to come.

The enclosed letter from Principal Joseph Passantino further outlines the request and the 2½-year process for the Board’s consideration.

4. LIST OF KEY ISSUES

There may be community members who would prefer that the school name remains Central Middle School. However, Central Middle School’s leadership engaged in extensive community outreach to gather input on this matter.

The Board most recently approved the renaming of East Kapolei Middle School to Honouliuli Middle School on January 19, 2020.¹ The Board also approved the renaming of Hale Kula Elementary to Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School on April 19, 2016.²

5. DISCUSS ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT

Costs associated with adjusting the signage due to the renaming of the school and school branding may be necessary.

¹https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/GBM_01162020_Board%20Action%20on%20renaming%20school%20to%20Honouliuli%20MS.pdf

²https://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Documents/2016-04-19%20FIC/FIC_04192016_Committee%20Action%20on%20Renaming%20Hale%20Kula%20El%20to%20Daniel%20K%20Inouye%20El.pdf

6. DESCRIBE ANY COMMUNITY OR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Central Middle School's leadership and community commenced a proactive initiative in January 2019 to change the name of the school to honor Princess Ruth Luka Keanolani Kanāhoahoa Ke'elikōlani. During the over 2½ years of the community engagement process, participants have expressed support for the renaming. Participants include community members; the school faculty; the school community council, which includes representatives from the school staff, students, parents, and the community; and the public.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that Board approve the name "Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani Middle School" for the current Central Middle School.

KTH:rmt

Attachments: Attachment A - Board Policy 301-8: Naming of Schools and School Facilities
Attachment B - Letter from Central Middle School Principal

POLICY 301-8

NAMING OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

The purpose of this policy is to provide consistency and uniformity in the naming of public schools and public school facilities. The name of a public school or public school facility should be an appropriate representation and reflection of the school or school-community.

A. Naming of Schools

The name of a school shall be recommended by the Superintendent of Education. The recommendation, with its supporting reasons, shall be submitted to the Board of Education for approval.

The name of a school shall be a unique identifier to promote and represent a school's location or identity.

A school named after a personage shall use the personage's formal title and full name as the official name of the school. Schools shall encourage the use of official names among their students and their communities.

B. Naming of School Facilities

Except for the naming of school facilities after benefactors, the name of a school facility shall be recommended by the school community council of each school. The recommendation, with its supporting reasons, shall be submitted to the complex area superintendent of the respective school for approval. The Board and Superintendent of Education shall be informed of the approved name.

The name of a school facility shall be a unique identifier to honor and acknowledge the exceptional service and significant contributions of a personage to the school, school-community, or public education, or to identify the facility in other ways that bear positive association for the school, school-community, or public education.

School facilities may be named to honor major benefactors whose significant contributions benefit the school, school-community, or public education; provided that naming of a school facility after a benefactor or benefactors shall be: (1) Recommended by the Superintendent of Education and submitted to the Board for approval; and (2) Consistent with the criteria and contribution guidelines specified in the regulations of the Department.

The Board may revoke the name of a school or school facility, if necessary.

The Department of Education shall adopt regulations to implement this policy. The regulations shall include criteria and contribution guidelines for the naming of school facilities after benefactors who have made significant contributions to benefit a school, school-community, or public education.

[Approved: 02/17/2015 (as Board Policy 301.8); amended: 06/21/2016 (renumbered as Board Policy 301-8)]

Former policy 6750 history: approved: 01/1971; amended: 01/01/1979, 11/17/2005, 12/2007



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HONOLULU DISTRICT OFFICE
4967 KILAUEA AVENUE
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816

June 28, 2021

TO: Phyllis Unebasami
Deputy Superintendent

FROM: Linell Dilwith *a. dilwith*
Complex Area Superintendent
Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt Complex Area

SUBJECT: Central Middle School Name Change

Attached is a memo from Central Middle School Principal Joseph Passantino regarding a proposed name change for his school. Principal Passantino shares background history of the school as well as a time line charting the process of the actions taken to date.

We would like to ask that this request be forwarded to the Board of Education for consideration.

Thank you.

LD:da

Attachment

c: Randall Tanaka, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Facilities and Operations



State of Hawaii
Department of Education
Central Middle School
1302 Queen Emma Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(808) 587-4400
Fax: (808) 587-4409

Superintendent Kishimoto • Assistant Superintendent Tanaka • Complex Area Superintendent Dilwith

I would like to reach out to you all and share our journey that Central has been a part of for the last few years in proposing a name change for our school. This name change initiative is not a reactive one for us, it is a proactive opportunity that the staff and the community have been working on since 2019. Central Middle School is located on the storied grounds where Keōua Hale once stood in downtown Honolulu, 'Oahu. Keōua Hale served as the palace and home of our beloved Hawai'i Princess Ruth Luka Keanolani Kanāhoahoa Ke'elikōlani.

In the school history dating back to 1895, there was a time when the school was once named Ke'elikōlani School and that name is currently on the school building that is located off of Kukui street. Ke'elikōlani School was unfortunately reverted back to Central because the name at that time period was hard for some to pronounce, per an article published in the Honolulu Star Bulletin in 1927. The proposed name, Ke'elikōlani Middle School, places the uniqueness of our prized place and culture in Hawai'i at the forefront to celebrate the rich history and diversity of our school campus.

As we continue to learn more about our school's history, it became clear and was suggested by historians and cultural practitioners that changing the name of the school to Ke'elikōlani Middle School would solidify and celebrate the school's proud history and profound connection to a cherished ali'i.

Initial meetings held for the name change began in January of 2019 and continued into March of 2020 and then the unforeseen pandemic lockdown took place. Meetings resumed in January of 2021. Faculty and staff presentations of the initiative began in February of 2020 and continued in Spring of 2021.

The following charts the process over the last two years:

1-11-19	Name Change Idea generated from CMS Faculty and Community Members	3-16-21	Work school values with Ke'elikōlani values
1-21-19	Communication with Principal about the Proposal	3-29-21	School Internal Outreach
4-9-19	Share the reasons why the change is proposed and identify interested individuals	4-1-21	Alumni Outreach – Google Meets
9-23-19	Creation of Vision and Mission Statement	4-15-21	Community Outreach – Google Meets
11-20-19	Creation of Fact Sheet and Initial Survey	5-5-21	Formal DOE Admin Outreach
2-5-20	Outreach to DOE Faculty to share initiative	5-6-21	Initiative Shared at Downtown Neighborhood Board
2-22-21	Creation of formal survey, timeline outline created, stakeholder outreach	5-25-21	Information shared at SCC meeting SCC moves to approve name change

It is our honor and privilege to request your consideration to formally accept our bid to change our school name. We have invested the time and attention to do the outreach to engage our families, our community, and our neighborhood. We feel that this change will reinvigorate our school community as it gives Princess Ke'elikōlani her due respect and allows us as a school to embrace and celebrate who we are and allows for us to create our next chapter in our school history. Additional information about our initiative is available at your request.

Aloha,

Joseph Passantino