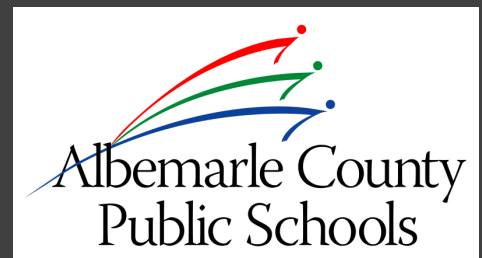


Jan. 12, 2023 | Karen C. Waters, Director of Community Education



# School Name Review Final Report

Meriwether Lewis Elementary School  
1610 Owensville Road Charlottesville, VA





# School Name Review

## Meriwether Lewis Elementary School

### Introduction

On October 25, 2018, the School Board directed the Superintendent to:

1. Add [school division values](#) to the criteria for naming school buildings and facilities.
2. Review the names of all schools in the division, named after individuals, taking into account how faithful those designations are to the values of our school division.
3. Report recommendations to the Board for changing the names of schools that are inconsistent with our values.

As a result of this directive, seven reviews have taken place, with the Board approving three schools be renamed in alignment with [policy FA](#):

**Paul H. Cale Elementary**

January 23, 2020

**Mortimer Sutherland Middle School**

August 13, 2020

**Virginia L. Murray Elementary**

April 1, 2021

**Community Public Charter School (Murray)**

April 1, 2021

**Jack Jouett Middle School**

August 12, 2021

**Broadus Wood Elementary School**

March 10, 2022

**Mary Carr Greer Elementary School**

July 14, 2022

► **Mountain View Elementary School**

Approved new name (effective date: July 1, 2020)

► **Lakeside Middle School**

Approved new name (effective date: July 1, 2021)

► **Virginia L. Murray**

Approved to retain the name (effective date: July 1, 2021)

► **Community Lab School**

Approved new name (effective date: July 1, 2021)

► **Journey Middle School**

Approved new name (effective date: July 1, 2022)

► **Broadus Wood Elementary School**

Approved to retain the name (effective date: July 1, 2022)

► **Mary Carr Greer Elementary School**

Approved to retain the name (effective date: July 1, 2023)

The policy provisions direct staff to involve students, teachers, and interested citizens that reflect the diversity of the school division in the process of naming or renaming schools with these intentions:

**REFLECTION:** When we are faced with the renaming of a school, we have an opportunity to respond to a negative time in our past by embracing our values and bolstering a positive future for our children.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Ensure the process includes multiple methods of engagement (e.g., survey, community meetings, interpretation services, recordings, press releases, etc.).

**INCLUSION OF ALL VOICES:** We are committed to conducting an inclusive process in which the school community feels welcome to participate and contribute ideas for their school's new name.

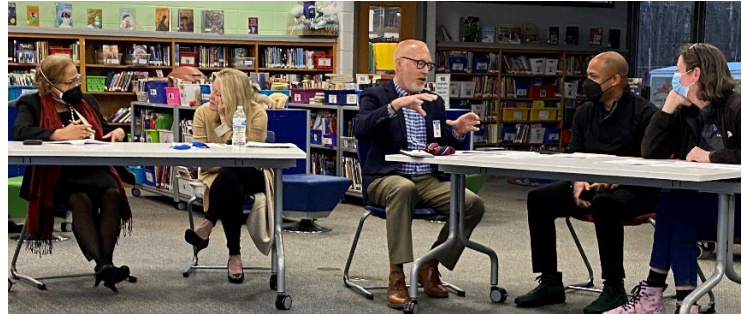
On October 13, 2022, an advisory committee was appointed to review the name of Meriwether Lewis Elementary School (MLES).

# Executive Summary

Under the leadership of Chair Cheryl Wetmore-Simpson with the support of Project Manager Karen Waters, Director of Community Education, a diverse committee of 12 individuals consisting of three ACPS staff, four parents of current Meriwether Lewis Elementary Students, and five community members with no students at the school held two open community meetings, edited and distributed two online surveys to the public, compiled research on Meriwether Lewis, and participated in four closed organizational meetings. **As they were unable to come to agreement on one name, a vote by secret ballot resulted in their recommendation of three names for consideration by the Superintendent, listed in the order of the number of votes:**

- Ivy Elementary
- Owensville Elementary
- Meriwether Lewis Elementary

## Advisory Committee



Advisory Committee members were selected from a pool of diverse individuals expressing interest in serving the ACPS community, and their investment of time as well as their willingness to engage in thoughtful deliberations was noteworthy and invaluable. We thank them for their commitment and leadership.

**Cheryl Wetmore-Simpson | Teacher/Chair**  
**Jennifer Underwood | Principal**  
**Laura Morris | Assistant Principal**  
**Seth Lovell | Parent**  
**Tamika Elliot | Parent**  
**Corey Brandon Lindsey | Parent**  
**Jessica Allen | Parent**  
**Caroline Ayres | Community Member**  
**Lorenzo Dickerson | Community Member**  
**Robert Stubin | Community Member**  
**Charles Timko | Community Member**  
**Janet Webster | Community Member**

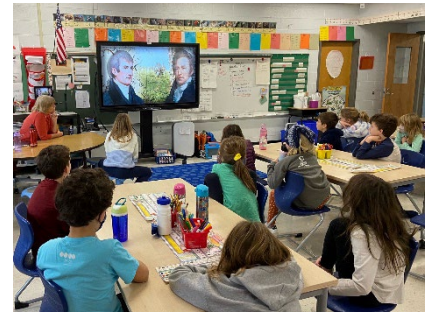


# Advisory Committee Review Process

## Student Engagement



	Bluebird	Discovery/Exp	Ivy	MLES	Owensville
5th gr	11	6	2	1	1
4th grade	11	11	11	11	11
3rd grade	11	11	11	11	11
2nd grade	11	11	11	11	11
1st grade	11	11	11	11	11
Kindergarten	11	11	11	11	11
Total	46	15	77	160	23



- Students Voting at School—Students learned the importance of voting, with grades K-4 voting on final names by ballot and grade 5 students also completing online survey #1
  - 321 students voted; 160 chose MLES, while a majority voted for other names:
    - Bluebird Elementary: 46
    - Discovery/Expedition/Explorer Elementary: 15
    - Ivy Elementary: 77
    - Meriwether Lewis Elementary: 160
    - Owensville Elementary: 23
- **The Name Jar** by Yangsook Choi was read as a school
- Students viewed [Meriwether Lewis and William Clark | PBS World Explorers](#)

## Community Engagement

- Communication
  - MLES School & PTO Facebook
  - “News from the Nest” Newsletter
  - ACPS Media Releases, Social Media & Web Page
- Public Participation
  - Two Community Meetings, 150 requests for meeting links
    - Speakers included: Julie Govan, Philip Andrew Hamilton, Eduardo Montes-Bradley & Keenan Timko
  - 25 Emails received from the public
  - 2 Surveys
    - Survey #1: 421 respondents (Includes all 5th graders)
    - Survey #2: 416 respondents
- Community Outreach – Email invitations for participation sent to relevant community groups
  - Virginia Tribal Education Consortium (VTEC)
  - UVA Descendants of Enslaved Laborers,
  - Jefferson School African American Heritage Center
  - Oak Union Baptist Church
  - Albemarle-Charlottesville Historical Society
  - UVA Corcoran Dept. of History

*“I have not found anything indicating the VA tribes had any relationship with Lewis, definitely not organized in the 20th century.”*

*--Dona Richardson Craft, Virginia Tribal Education Consortium (VTEC)*

## Research

Committee members gathered and shared [six pages of research](#) about Meriwether Lewis from a wide variety of sources including books, journals, online articles, and video. Additionally, the Project Manager examined [primary source documents](#) and spoke with local experts, including faculty from the University of Virginia. These revealed many different views of this very complex namesake who was raised near the location of the school, and that there are ample opportunities for students to gain an understanding of all the contradictions present in humanity, as well as how views of historical figures can evolve with time, in addition to who is control of the narrative.

The information below was considered when determining whether Meriwether Lewis exemplifies **equity, excellence, family & community, and wellness**, which are Albemarle County Public Schools' values. Further deliberation included alignment with our [Anti-Racism Policy](#).

### Meriwether Lewis Elementary School, Est. 1922

“In ways different than the Lee and Jackson statues, the George Rogers Clark and the Lewis and Clark statues are also monuments to white supremacy. They are instrumental in creating and perpetuating the myth of brave white men conquering a supposedly unknown and unclaimed land.”

Prof. Christian McMillan,  
UVA Dept. of History

At the time Meriwether Lewis Elementary was built and named, Charlottesville/Albemarle, like many areas of the south, were experiencing a resurgence of Klan activity and actively implementing Jim Crow laws to quell the growing economic power of non-whites. In fact, anyone not white, including Native Americans, were classified as Negro, effectively eliminating them from being counted as a race.

During this time, Paul Goodloe McIntire, the Daughters of the Confederacy and others took an active role in naming schools for Confederate heroes such as Lt. Col. Venable (1925), and statues were erected of Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Lewis and Clark, and George Rogers Clark.

#### How did Lewis meet Clark?



According to the [National Park Service](#), “How Meriwether Lewis and William Clark first met can be credited to an empty bottle of alcohol and a fully loaded political attitude.”

[Anthony Wayne Papers dated 11/6/1795 housed at the Historical Society of](#)

[Pennsylvania](#) contain an “Account of the court-martial of Meriwether Lewis on November 6, 1795. Lewis was charged by his commanding officer for being drunk, insulting his superior officer, and disturbing the peace. He pleaded not guilty and was acquitted. This court-martial led to his transfer to another unit, where he met William Clark. In 1804, Lewis and Clark would undertake their famous expedition to explore the Louisiana Purchase and the Pacific Northwest.”



## Meriwether Lewis and Ownership of Enslaved Persons



According to a well-researched and documented exhibit and website hosted by Thomas Jefferson Foundation and the Jefferson Library at the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies, [the mother of Meriwether Lewis, Lucy Thornton Meriwether Lewis Marks](#) was born into a family of great wealth—"rich in lands, in plate and slaves." with her Great Grandfather having obtained land grants of some 19,000 acres in Albemarle County. In her teens, she married 35 year old Lt. William Lewis, her step-brother and first cousin once-removed, whose father owned 21,600 acres in Albemarle County.

["Lt. William Lewis](#) (1735 - 1779) had grown up in great prosperity as his father owned 21,600 acres in the Albemarle County area as well as an interest in 100,000 acres in Greenbrier County (now West Virginia), (Anderson, p. 26) Upon his father's death in 1765, William Lewis inherited "Locust Hill" and 1,896 acres on Ivy Creek (600 of which he later sold) and the slaves to work it." (monticello.org)

*"In the 18th century Lewis was granted over 17k acres of property along the eastern ridge. While there is no smoking gun there is a correlation between the need to increase labor as these lands become cultivated. What is also true is that he held more land than any other plantation owner of his time. Under those circumstances it is fair to assume that his holdings would lead to the cultivation of a lucrative economy of chattel slavery that would result in Albemarle County being the 4th richest area in all of Virginia."*

*Dr. Andrea Douglas, Executive Director Jefferson School African American Heritage Center*

When William Lewis died In 1779, as the eldest son, Meriwether Lewis inherited the plantation at the age of 5. In addition to the land, home and his father's cash he became owner of 24 enslaved people. In 1791, he took on the job of running the plantation, which produced wheat as its agricultural crop, having previously depleted the soil growing tobacco. While he served in the military and on the expedition, his mother and guardians oversaw the operation of the plantation and he continued to profit from their labor.

***No historical documentation has been found that Meriwether Lewis took any action in his lifetime or in his will to change the status of the enslaved people on his plantation. At his mother's death, the estate owned 47 enslaved individuals.***

## Meriwether Lewis and John Pernier



Meriwether Lewis is often lauded for hiring a free black man as his valet when he became Governor of Louisiana. That man was John Pernier, pictured here. John Pernier has been described as a "free mulatto" previously employed by Thomas Jefferson. When Meriwether Lewis became Governor of Louisiana, Mr. Pernier accompanied him as his servant, but rarely was able to collect his wages, [and at the time of his death, Meriwether Lewis owed him \\$271.50](#), which Mr. Pernier attempted to collect from his family and eventually Mr. Jefferson. Lucy refused to pay him, accusing him of killing Meriwether Lewis, and he later committed suicide, as he was heavily indebted to his landlord. [Thomas Jefferson eventually intervened, requesting William Lewis pay the blind and impoverished landlord](#), as evidenced in his letter published in the William and Mary Quarterly. Jackson, D. (1964). On the Death of Meriwether Lewis's Servant. *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 21(3), 445–448.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1918455>

# Names Under Consideration

As noted in the Executive Summary, the Advisory Committee was unable to agree on a single name, and were individually polled to determine consensus on three names in compliance with policy FA. The names recommended to the Superintendent by the Advisory Committee in the order of the number of votes garnered by each are the following:

- **Ivy Elementary**
- **Owensville Elementary**
- **Meriwether Lewis Elementary**

Research conducted by the Albemarle Historical Society indicates that the community of Owensville along with Owensville road were named after the Owens family who lived in that area. William Owens first bought land along Mechums River in 1778. His son, David Owens had a sawmill slightly northwest of Owensville (visible on this 1875 map <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012586250/>), and both owned and enslaved people of African descent.

## Superintendent's Recommendation

Dr. Haas recommends that Meriwether Lewis Elementary School be renamed as Ivy Elementary School beginning July 1, 2023.

## Other Recommendations

The Advisory Committee recommends clarification of policy FA to more clearly define the level of consensus required for approval of a final name, that no biographical information be provided on future surveys.

Project Manager recommends a review of policy FA to include consideration of one committee to conduct all further reviews, and additionally, that Anti-Racism Orientation and advance compilation of research by staff be provided at first organizational meeting.

## Acknowledgments

In addition to the Advisory Board and ACPS staff members **Dr. Helen Dunn, Lauren Hunt, Phil Giaramita, Chris Gilman, Dr. Daphne Keiser, Neely Minton, Dorothy Jordan, and Katie Breaud**, a debt of gratitude is owed to the following individuals for their kind assistance with the MLES Name Review Process:

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**Dr. Andrea Douglas**, Executive Director Jefferson School African American Heritage Center

**Dr. Jeff Hantman**, Professor Emeritus Department of Anthropology University of Virginia

**Dr. Phyllis K. Leffler**, Professor Emerita, Department of History University of Virginia

**Margaret Maliszewski**, Planning Manager, Albemarle County Department of Community Development

**Dr. Christian W. McMillen**, Professor of History, University of Virginia

**Dona Richardson-Craft**, STEP Project Director Virginia Tribal Education Consortium (VTEC)

**Andrew Williams**, Digital Services Archivist Historical Society of Pennsylvania