

Naming Schools ^[1]

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School naming

a school by any other name

by Cris Crissman, PhD

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On my playground, [Daniel Boone](#) ^[2] once chased and probably “kilt a bar.” At least that’s the story I heard when I went to school at Boone Trail High School (now grades pre-K– 12) in [Harnett County](#) ^[3].

Daniel Boone may not have been much of a speller, and he may have never traveled near Mamers, North Carolina, but he has always been one of my favorite larger-than-life heroes because of that early connection or link.

A name can become a living link for us to someone or something from our time or another time. Many schools are named for a person, place, or idea. If it’s a person, then that person could be famous in the community (Fred A. Anderson Elementary in [Pamlico County](#) ^[4]), the state (Jay M. Robinson Middle School in [Mecklenburg County](#) ^[5]), or even the country and world (Booker T. Washington Elementary in [Bladen County](#) ^[6]).

If it’s a place, then a school could be named for a body of water (Tuckaseegee Elementary in Mecklenburg County), a beach (Wrightsville Beach Elementary in [New Hanover County](#) ^[7]), a mountain (Beech Mountain Elementary in [Avery County](#) ^[8]), or even a man-made wonder (Hiwassee Dam Elementary/Middle in [Cherokee County](#) ^[9]).

Bryant Gibson from Mrs. Rose Throckmorton’s fourth-grade class at Rural Hall Elementary researched his school and town name and found that the name came about for a distinctive reason. The local postmaster in this once-rural part of [Forsyth County](#) ^[10] had a hall in his home so big that the local residents could drive their horses and wagons through it to pick up their mail. Hence, “Rural Hall” became the name of the community and school.

Or a school’s name could be directional and relative to its location in the county. There are four Northwest Elementary Schools in North Carolina and several other county-specific “northwests,” such as Northwest Cabarrus Middle School in [Cabarrus County](#) ^[11].

Finally, schools could be named for a lofty idea or ideal, such as First Flight Elementary in [Dare County](#) ^[12], Freedom High in [Burke County](#) ^[13], or Independence High in Mecklenburg County.

“What’s in a name?” Shakespeare asked. “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Schools are important civic or community symbols. Every school system has a policy for naming schools. [Wake County](#) ^[14] names them for locations. Chapel Hill–Carrboro City Schools may name one for “special features of the site, its location, or in honor or memory of people” (*Chapel Hill–Carrboro City Schools Newsletter*, September 16, 2002). This school system encourages a lot of community participation in the naming of its schools, and sometimes as many as 150 names are suggested.

Mel and Zora Rashkis Elementary School in the Chapel Hill–Carrboro City Schools system opened its doors for the 2003–2004 year. Zora Rashkis had taught for years in the system and hosted a long-running cablevision show, Meet the Teacher, which showcased area teachers and other staff, students, programs, and issues in the school system. Both Mel and Zora Rashkis are known as leaders in volunteer organizations in their communities. It is not unusual to see the couple visiting their namesake school to volunteer or just to see how things are going (Rashkis Elementary Web Site, School History Section).

What is in the name of a school? A lot of pride and respect for a special place in the community. But, ultimately, what counts the most is not the name emblazoned above the school’s door or on the sign on the front lawn but the quality of the education within those walls.

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