

Proposal to Montclair Board of Education
by the
Man On The Moon Committee

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Proposal

We propose that the **Montclair Board of Education** vote to re-name **Mt. Hebron Middle School** in honor of former student and resident, Apollo 11 Astronaut **Buzz Aldrin** - the second human being to walk on the moon.

Rationale

The Township of Montclair has the distinct honor of being known as the birthplace and childhood home of one of the most renowned and famous people in the world, Edwin Eugene “Buzz” Aldrin, Jr.

The **Montclair Public School System** has the proud legacy of having educated this extraordinarily accomplished Doctor of Science and Astronautics as well as one of the greatest explorers in human history. As the world watched on July 20, 1969, Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon - as a pilot on the United States’ Apollo 11 spacecraft. He is also a decorated veteran of the Korean War during which he served as an Air Force pilot. He graduated from West Point Academy before attending MIT where he received his doctorate degree.

As a Montclair resident, Buzz Aldrin attended Edgemont Elementary School, Mt. Hebron Middle School and graduated from Montclair High School. At MHS, he was a pole vaulter and played center on the 1946 undefeated State Champion football team.

Of the Montclair public school system, Mr. Aldrin had this to say, *“I finished first in mathematics, finished near the top of my class at West Point and did well at MIT. I attribute that to the education system in Montclair.”* (Montclair Times, January 22, 2015)

Specifically, of Mt. Hebron Middle School, he said, *“That was the turning point where I focused my dedication to education. That middle school would be most revered in my retrospect of my youth.”* (Montclair Times, January 22, 2015)

It was his education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics that, he says, created the foundation of his work on the space flights in NASA’s Gemini and Apollo programs

What’s in a Name?

Why re-name something? Because a name tells a story. And the Montclair Public School District has a story to tell in the life of Buzz Aldrin. An argument can be made that we are currently not sharing one of the most powerful stories we have to tell. And it is almost exclusively ours to tell. A name communicates to the world what you stand for. If our school district stands largely for an educational foundation in the STEM fields, then why wouldn't we demonstrate that by honoring one of the most famous scientist in the world who also happens to be our most famous resident?

Benefits to Re-naming a Montclair School:

Buzz Aldrin is the literal personification of the values that the **Montclair Public School District** holds most dear; tapping into one's inner potential through education, and using that foundation to impact the world in ways that are limited only by one's imagination.

By re-naming Mt. Hebron, **Students in the Montclair Public School District will:**

- Make the connection between their education and one of the most important moments and scientific advances of the 20th Century.
- Adopt the pride that is *exclusive* to their local community and school system.
- Be reminded, in perpetuity, of the heights to which one can soar as a result of a strong educational foundation, hard work and dedication.
- Will see the importance of the fields of study so central to the **Montclair Public School District's** platform - science, technology, engineering and mathematics. And possibly benefit from increased funding in this area.

The **Montclair School District** and the **Township of Montclair** will:

- Raise the **profile of the entire school district** within the state of New Jersey.
- Re-emphasize the story and **themes of our magnet system** which is so central to what the township and school district stand for.
- Utilize Mt. Hebron as a much **higher profile site** for local and regional science competitions, famous guest speakers, and other public events.

- Leverage the **timing** of the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the first lunar landing for a high profile, town-wide - or even regional - event at the school celebrating the anniversary.
- Leverage the **media**, which will begin covering the anniversary several months before the actual day. Media outlets will need locations from which to do live shots for months leading up to the actual anniversary. Quite simply, without the school, they will do all their live shots in front of Mr. Aldrin's childhood home on Princeton Place. News outlets can use "Buzz Aldrin Middle School" as a location any time Mr. Aldrin, NASA, lunar landings, or for that matter - Mars, crop up in the news.
- Leveraging **Mr. Aldrin's already public sentiments** about Mt. Hebron Middle School. Buzz has made public his feelings - specifically about his STEM studies at Mt. Hebron and their connection to and impact on his military career with the Air Force and with NASA. This public endorsement of the Montclair public school district will come up, in perpetuity, any time a member of the media does a background search on Buzz. Anytime he is in the news, phrases like these will be used on the air, online and in print: *Buzz Aldrin's beloved Montclair, NJ middle school; Buzz Aldrin's namesake school in Montclair, New Jersey; the Montclair school that Buzz Aldrin credits with beginning his trajectory to the moon.* **A school building named after him will forever publicly link the township of Montclair and the Montclair Public School District to mankind's first walk on the moon.**
- The township of Wapokoneta, Ohio, Neil Armstrong's hometown, built and created the magnificent **Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum**. Closer to home, West Orange, N.J. rebranded the entire township around the lightbulb, in honor of **Thomas Edison**, who was neither educated nor did he grow up in West Orange. While **Montclair may not have the resources to build a museum or re-brand the entire township** to recognize its own astronaut, it does have the resources to re-name a school in his honor. Simply put, this is do-able.

We hope that the Montclair Board of Education will vote on this issue at its next meeting in March.

Thank you for attention to this very important issue.

Respectfully,

Man on the Moon Committee
Montclair, New Jersey