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John James Audubon School No. 33 Renamed in Honor of Dr. Iris J. Banister

(June 21, 2024) The Rochester City School District is pleased to announce the Board of Education has voted to rename John James Audubon School No. 33 in honor of Dr. Iris J. Banister, effective July 2025.

Iris Banister, an educator and passionate advocate for community empowerment, made a lasting and meaningful impact on many lives. She spent 32 years working for the Rochester City School District as an elementary teacher, reading specialist, guidance counselor, transition facilitator, and house administrator.

A graduate of Jarvis Christian College in Texas, Banister was recruited to teach in Rochester and, once here, received a master’s degree in urban education from SUNY Geneseo. Later, she completed a master’s degree in education administration from SUNY Brockport, a doctorate in theological counseling from Master’s International School of Divinity in Indiana, and a doctorate in education and human development at the University of Rochester. Additionally, she was an adjunct professor of religion and African American Studies at St. John Fisher University and an education consultant.

“Iris Banister was a trailblazer in education,” said Dr. Carmine Peluso, Superintendent of Schools. “Her impact went beyond the classroom through her advocacy, particularly empowering women and girls. It is fitting we name this school in her honor to celebrate her legacy as a leader in our community.”

“Dr. Banister exemplified the spirit of dedication and service throughout her illustrious career,” said Cythnia Elliott, Board of Education President. “With her name attached to School No. 33, this is a permanent reminder of her commitment to education, advocacy for community engagement, and support for women and girls.”

For John James Audubon School No. 33 to be named Dr. Iris J. Banister School No. 33, a petition was submitted asking for a name change to be considered. As a result, a community forum was held on June 4, 2024, where two speakers participated.

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