



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Yonkers Times: CITY OF YONKERS & YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS WELCOME U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR AT OPENING CEREMONY FOR NEW SCHOOL NAMED IN HER HONOR

YONKERS TIMES September 22, 2024

*USSC Justice Sonia Sotomayor, with students attending the school named in her honor*



**(L-R) Assistant Principal Daniris Burgos; Associate Superintendent of Schools Lissette Colon-Collins; Roberto Rijos, Yonkers Joint School Construction Board; Yonkers Board of Education Trustee Rosemarie Linton; New York State Regent Aramina Vega Ferrer; New York State Regent Frances G. Wills; Yonkers City Council President Lakisha Collins-Bellamy; Yonkers Board of Education President Dr. Rosalba Corrado DelVecchio; Yonkers Deputy Mayor Susan Gerry; Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School student Juliet Vasquez; Principal Elda Perez-Mejia; U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor; Superintendent of Schools Aníbal Soler, Jr.; Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School student Ariadnny Andujar; Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano; Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School students; New York Assemblymember J. Gary Pretlow; New York Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins; Yonkers Board of Education Trustee Sheila Greenwald; Yonkers Board of Education Vice President Gail Burns; Yonkers Board of Education Trustee Kevin Cacace; New York Senator Shelley Mayer; New York Assemblymember Dr. Nader Sayegh; Yonkers Police Commissioner Christopher Sapienza**

*(Photo Credit: Maurice Mercado/City of Yonkers)*

***Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School is First of Three New Community Schools Planned to Rebuild Yonkers Schools—First New Yonkers Public School to be Constructed in 20 Years***

Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano, Yonkers Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools Mr. Aníbal Soler, Jr. along with local and state officials today welcomed U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor to celebrate the opening of the Yonkers Public School District's newly constructed school named in her honor. Located at 121 McLean Avenue, the community school will serve over 600 students from Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade and the local community. The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School is the first of three new schools to be constructed by the City of Yonkers in its efforts to rebuild the aging infrastructure of the Yonkers Public Schools.

Designed as a community school, the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School features multi-functional spaces that are accessible evenings and weekends without the need to open the entire school building. Special amenities include a multi-purpose gymnasium and meeting room with stage; a full-sized basketball court and locker rooms; a cafeteria and

meeting room with full kitchen; and a health suite with two exam rooms and a dental exam room. It is also the District's first school to be constructed in accordance with the Yonkers green building standards.

“The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School is the first of its kind in our District and is a model moving forward as we continue to rebuild our schools,” said **Mayor Spano**. “Our local schools are the heart of our neighborhoods and should be made accessible not only for educational enrichment, but also for the benefit of the families who live in the area. We are fortunate for the opportunity to welcome and dedicate a new school in recognition of the positive change Justice Sotomayor represents to our students and District.”

The Justice School is the first phase in implementing the Yonkers Joint Schools Construction and Modernization Plan, which began in 2016. The average age of a Yonkers Public School is 75 years old with many as old as 100 years old, making them some of the oldest in New York State. New York State passed legislation that enabled the creation of the Yonkers Joint Schools Construction Board, which bonded for the cost of the new \$75.6 million, 96,000 square foot facility. New York State allocated \$53 million of the project's total cost.

**Mayor Spano** added, “Today would not be possible without the commitment of the Yonkers State Delegation, our State leaders and school stakeholders in supporting our efforts to improve the environments in which our children learn. Let's keep up the momentum in fighting for the needs our students and their families deserve.”

Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School will also serve as a new Dual Language school that provides students with a rigorous academic program of instruction affirming multilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as the social, emotional, and intellectual development of each child. Dual language schools are designed for native and nonnative

English speakers to achieve bilingualism, biliteracy, cross-cultural competence, and academic proficiency equal to the levels achieved by students in non-English Language Learning programs. The school's instructional program, provided in both English and the home/primary language, aligns with New York State and Yonkers Learning Standards. Students will embark on a journey to earn the New York State Seal of Biliteracy when graduating from high school.

**Dr. Rosalba Corrado DelVecchio, Yonkers Board of Education President** said, "The naming of a school is an awesome task for a community and we chose to name this school in honor of Justice Sonia Sotomayor because her legacy is an extraordinary example of resilience, of rising above adversity, of breaking barriers and lifting others as she rises. This school stands as a tribute to her unwavering commitment to justice, education, and community. It will not only serve as a place to inspire academic excellence in two languages, but also as a center for the entire community, where students and families come together to thrive. Thanks to the leadership of Mayor Spano with the Trustees, and the dedication of everyone involved, we have created a lasting foundation for the future, where generations of Yonkers students will be educated to empower themselves and to make their own mark on the world."

**Superintendent of School Aníbal Soler, Jr.** commented, "The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School represents more than just a new building – it symbolizes the promise of opportunity and achievement for our students and the entire Yonkers community. Justice Sotomayor's incredible journey from a neighborhood like ours to the highest court in the land serves as a powerful example of what can be achieved through hard work, resilience, and a passion for learning. This school will be a place where students and families alike can gather, learn, and grow. We are deeply grateful to Mayor Spano for his vision and to all the stakeholders who made this dream a reality."

“When we invest in public education, the children of New York reap the benefits. Today, we celebrate the results of that investment, and thank United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor for joining us here in Yonkers to cut the ribbon on a school named in her honor,” **said New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins.** “Our kids deserve to receive the best education we can provide, and to receive it in schools which facilitate and enhance that educational experience. The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School will both provide an education which meets the needs of our children and enrich our Yonkers community. I was happy to work with Senate Education Chair Shelley Mayer and the entire Yonkers state delegation to deliver on legislation and substantial funding to support quality education, and the building of new schools.”

**New York State Senator Shelley B. Mayer** said, “I am deeply honored to join Mayor Mike Spano and the leadership of Yonkers Public Schools in welcoming U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor to Westchester for the opening ceremony of the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School. This community school will provide hundreds of Yonkers students and community members with opportunities and resources they need to thrive. I am proud to have been involved in the process in the State Legislature that has helped make this new school come to life and I thank Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, my colleagues in the Yonkers Senate and Assembly delegation, and all those who had a part in ensuring this incredible school is open to our Yonkers children.”

**New York Assemblyman Nader Sayegh** commented, “The Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School reflects a new page for Yonkers Public Schools. This state of the art facility will serve as a pillar in the community for a diverse student body. As a former Principal and School Board Trustee, I look forward to seeing the amazing work done by our Yonkers School staff in this new school.”

**New York Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow** said, “I am honored to be a part of this wonderful and momentous occasion. Fittingly named after a Justice who is an inspiring figure and highly admired by many for her dedication to justice, the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School will quickly become a beacon of learning, fostering a culture of excellence that will have a lasting impact to all the children who walk through its doors.”

**New York Assemblymember MaryJane Shimsky** said, “Justice Sotomayor represents the potential for each of us to attain excellence and seek opportunity in the United States. I can think of no better namesake for this beautiful, state-of-the-art addition to the Yonkers school system. With education, medical care, and other critical programs under one roof, this building will be a permanent asset not only to our children, but to their families and community as a whole.”

**Yonkers City Council President Lakisha Collins-Bellamy** commented, “It was an emotional and deeply humbling experience to stand alongside U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor for the ribbon-cutting of this remarkable new school. Having a Yonkers Public Schools in our community named after her is a great honor, and I’m proud that future generations will be inspired by her legacy of justice, integrity and service.”

Built on the site of the former St. Denis Catholic School, the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Community School is the first Yonkers Public School constructed since 2000 and is designed in accordance to the Yonkers green building standards. The school’s sustainable features include photo voltaic solar panels, green roofs, high-efficiency electric heat pumps (no fossil fuels used for heating), extensive natural daylighting with sunshades, low water use plumbing fixtures, fresh air ventilation with MERV 13 filtration, LED light fixtures, recycled content in materials and low VOC interior finishes and furnishings.

The new Yonkers Public School is dedicated to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. **Sonia Sotomayor, Associate Justice**, was born in Bronx, New York, on June 25, 1954. She earned a B.A. in 1976 from Princeton University, graduating *summa cum laude* and a member of Phi Beta Kappa and receiving the Pyne Prize, the highest academic honor Princeton awards to an undergraduate. In 1979, she earned a J.D. from Yale Law School where she served as an editor of the Yale Law Journal. She served as Assistant District Attorney in the New York County District Attorney's Office from 1979–1984. She then litigated international commercial matters in New York City at Pavia & Harcourt, where she served as an associate and then partner from 1984–1992. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated her to the U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, and she served in that role from 1992–1998. **In 1997, she was nominated by President Bill Clinton to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit where she served from 1998–2009.** President Barack Obama nominated her as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court on May 26, 2009, and she assumed this role August 8, 2009.

The new Yonkers Public School opened its doors to students on September 5, 2024.

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