

# History of

## Simonton Elementary School

Richard Caldwell Simonton gave more than his name to Simonton Elementary. Indeed, the Barrow County administrator and Lilburn Elementary School teacher who would eventually serve as Gwinnett County superintendent left a legacy. His love for learning and determination to succeed would permeate the walls of an elementary school not even built until 28 years after his death.

Simonton Elementary School has known five principals since its 1993 founding. Betty Robinson served from 1993 to 2002; Dr. Carolyn Ford from 2002 to 2004; Dr. Dot Schoeller from August 2004 to 2010; Dr. Chandra Young from 2010 to 2012; and Clifton Alexander from Jan. 2013 to today. For all of these leaders, the commitment to educating children well has been of paramount importance.

Simonton is located on 17 acres just outside Lawrenceville's city limits. It is on this property that a story of great change and opportunity has unfolded. From a beginning enrollment of 900 students in 1993, the population increased 24 percent to 1,183 by 1998. The resulting lack of space meant 10 classrooms had to be situated in trailers. By 2002, the school's enrollment had skyrocketed 29 percent to 1,657 students. Additionally, a 63 percent increase in the number of modular units took the school from 10 trailers to 27. That year, a 10-classroom building addition inclusive of a computer

### FAST FACTS

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**Address:** 275 Simonton Road  
Lawrenceville, GA 30045

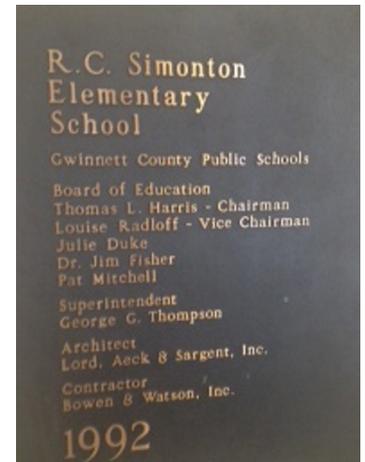
The following have served as principals of Simonton Elementary School:

1993–2002	Betty Robinson
2002–04	Dr. Carolyn Ford
2004–2010	Dr. Dot Schoeller
2010–Dec. 2012	Dr. Chandra Young
Jan. 2013–Present	Clifton Alexander

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**School Colors:** Black and Gold  
**School Mascot:** Black Knights

lab and resource classrooms reduced the number of trailers from 27 to 15. While a 1996-97 rezoning relocated approximately 40 students to another cluster, a continuous influx of people into the community resulted in a 2003-04 enrollment of 2,100 students with 46 classes located in portable



classrooms. A new elementary school, Margaret Winn Holt, opened in August 2004, and redistricting relieved Simonton of 900 students. Enrollment has remained in the 850-900 student range since that time.

The Simonton community is highly diverse, both demographically and professionally. Parent education levels vary from those with only some high school to those with graduate degrees. Since 1999, the number of ethnicities comprising Simonton's student population has changed considerably. Indeed, the increase in ethnic and cultural diversity is a hallmark of the school Simonton has become. In 1993, 88 percent of the students were Caucasian, with the remaining 12 percent of African-American and Asian decent. Since 1998, the school has experienced substantial demographic changes. Simonton's international population speaks 47 different languages. In 1998, Simonton served 65 ESOL students with one-and-a-half teachers. By 2001–02, 173 ESOL students were served by four teachers. That trend continued in 2006 with six ESOL teachers serving 283 students. By 2016, the school's student population was approximately 44 percent African American, 31 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Caucasian, 5 percent Asian, and 4 percent Multi-racial.

As the school continued to grow it also became more connected to the Central Gwinnett Cluster. This led to a change in the school mascot from the original mascot of the Simonton Eagles to the Black Knight that is a symbol associated with the entire Central Cluster.

To foster community involvement, Simonton offers a variety of opportunities for parents. Parents are invited to participate in conferences, parent groups, and workshops that are offered at varying times of the day and evening. The school's Parent Center offers resources for parents to use at home to support their child's learning and engages parents in volunteer work at the school. The school also encourages community members to volunteer in the school's mentoring program to support overall student achievement.

Simonton's focus on student achievement is supported through accelerated instruction for high-achieving students and support for other students through the Early Intervention Program and English Language Learners Program. Many Simonton students participate in before-school Computer Art Club, Saturday Math and Science Camp, and Saturday Writing Camps. These enrichment and remediation opportunities provided exploration in technology and art integration, engaged students in inquiry-based exploration and critical problem-solving

activities, and provided opportunities for building writing fluency. Another support for students is found in the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program which recognizes students for exhibiting appropriate conduct at school.

While the school itself has grown and its student body has changed, and even the school's mascot has been updated over time... one thing has remained constant— Simonton Elementary's focus on students. Simonton's motto is "Every Student Every Day, Deserves to Learn, Lead, and Excel." A canvas of possibility, the school that bears the name of a dedicated educator cherishes each child that passes through her portals. At the end of the day, no matter the inevitable challenges, if the children have been helped, nurtured, and educated, that's what matters.

Ah, yes. Teach the children well. Mr. Simonton would be proud.