

History of

Knight Elementary School

Knight Elementary School, which is located at 401 River Road in Lilburn, Georgia, opened in August of 1975. The property formerly owned by the late W. Luther Nash had been purchased for the school location in March of 1974.

Knight Elementary School was named to honor Victor H. Knight, a Gwinnett County educator who taught at Carter's Academy, Harbins, Five Forks and Bethesda Schools. He served as principal of Dacula High School for 14 years, then at South Gwinnett High School from 1957 until his death in October of 1964. His daughter, Leslie Jo Bentley, was the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for Gwinnett County Public Schools for over 10 years, and was its Director of Pupil Personnel Services until 1987.

The school was planned and built during a period of very rapid population growth in the Lilburn-Five Forks area. It was comprised of grades Kindergarten through 6th at first, but was changed to K-5 in subsequent years. The school, planned for a population of 800, had 32 classrooms along two halls, and two courtyards which could be used for outdoor activities. The student population grew rapidly, reaching its largest enrollment of 1,100 within three years. After that peak, the population began to decline until Knight was one of the smallest schools in Gwinnett County. As the county population began to surge in other areas, Knight's attendance zone has experienced a few changes

FAST FACTS

Address: 401 N. River Road
Lilburn, GA 30047

The following have served as principals of Knight ES:

1975-82	Martha Brady
1982-83	Shirley Davis Chapman
1983-2006	Dr. Burrelle S. Meeks
2006-2012	Mona Roberts
2012-Present	Toni Ferguson

School Colors: Orange and Blue

School Mascot: STAR

School Flower: Daisy

School Tree: White Oak

School Bird: Cardinal

Historians: Ruth Wither (1989), Burrelle S. Meeks (2006), Mona Roberts (2007)

over time. With the change in 1999-2000 came increasing diversity and opportunities for multicultural experiences. The school became a Title I school focused on providing resources to its students. The entire community continued to maintain the high standards and expectations which had become the reputation of Knight Elementary School.



Knight Elementary School has had four principals. The school's first principal, Martha Brady, chose the school colors of red and white, selected the school's first logo "Knight's Dynamite," and set the tone for excellence in education. (The mascot was later changed to a Star and the school's colors were ultimately changed to orange and blue to align with the colors used throughout the Parkview Cluster.) Ms. Brady's use of committees in decision-making led to a shared leadership philosophy which spread throughout the county. Shirley Davis-Chapman, Knight's second principal, continued the focus on excellence for one year before being transferred to a new elementary school within the county.

Burrelle S. Meeks, Knight's third principal, brought a new and vibrant approach to learning. Her knowledge of the developmental stages of children brought about the awareness of each child's "uniqueness." Dr. Meeks believed in a holistic approach to teaching and children learning through life experiences. She was the driving force for achieving the recognition of "Georgia School of Excellence" in 1987 and "National School of Excellence" in 1988. In 1990, Knight's teachers were recognized by the Georgia Teachers of English with an Excellence in English award. In 1996, Knight Town, a dynamic schoolwide micro society, was given the Economic Program of Excellence Award by the Georgia Council on Economic Education and, in 1997, was recognized as Outstanding Elementary Program of the Year by the Georgia Association for Social Studies. In 2005, when classroom teachers and students partnered with school system bus managers, Knight earned national recognition through the KC3 Citizenship in Motion Award. During that same year, Knight was recognized with the Georgia 2005 Gold Award by having 97% of the children in grades 1-5 pass all sections of the Georgia Criterion Referenced Content Tests.

Mona Roberts became the fourth principal of Knight Elementary School in June 2006. The school continued receiving accolades for its high performance in both academics and citizenship for performance during the 2005-06 school year. Knight was a National Winner for the KC3 Citizenship in Motion program recognizing the school's efforts in high expectations for both citizenship and behavioral collaboration. The Silver Award was given to Knight by the Georgia Department of Education for exemplary performance in the area of student achievement. Dr. Burrelle Meeks, former principal, was also recognized as one of the top performing principals in Georgia, one of six in Gwinnett County. The school's STAR (Students Taking Awesome Responsibility) Discipline Program was

recognized throughout schools in the state of Georgia.

In 1996, new playground equipment— designed by Frederick Martin to look like castles, a boat, and a pirate island— was funded and actually built by the PTA parents, and teachers. The exciting play areas, along with Naturally Knight, our backyard habitat, became well-loved community gathering places for all ages. Six Eagle Scout projects, outdoor classrooms, trash collectors, two small pools and two flower gardens, added to the overall appearance and to its popularity. Over the years, Knight has earned honors for its outdoor educational programming, including winning Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful awards more than 23 times. Today, the school still extends learning outside of the traditional classroom through its outdoor learning environment and hosts an annual "Knight in the Garden" event to celebrate this unique teaching and learning environment.

A building renovation in 1999 gave the school a larger art room with a kiln; a music room; a student kitchen; a larger clinic; improved offices for the administrators, the bookkeeper and the counselor; as well as a technology center housing 30 student computers, four teacher stations, three printers, a scanner and seven servers. In 2000, the community came together again to finance a new red and white floor covering for the activity building where the physical education lessons take place.

The school's lunchroom during this time was referred to as the STARlight Dining Room. It featured clocks with various time zones and flags from around the world were suspended from the ceiling. Classical music was played during the student lunch times and stuffed animals were used as decorations and as incentives for eating healthy foods. The lunchroom supported student achievement by using Gold STARS recognizing students who add, subtract, multiply and divide 80 problems correctly in one minute painted on the 28-year old red arrow. Books were displayed on a shelf for the students to enjoy after they finish eating their lunches. Most importantly, the students, staff and parents enjoyed eating the food which was prepared with love by a dynamic team of cooks.

During the fall of 2006, the passing of SPLOST finalized plans for the first building addition to Knight Elementary. In January 2007, work began for an 18-month building project which added 22 classrooms and additional multi-purpose rooms to the current school building. The two-story construction project also provided a new media center, music room, and art room. Renovations to the original building included a new kitchen and cafeteria, a conference room, and improvements throughout the

building. The exterior of the building also received a face lift. Additional parking, as well as new pavement on existing lots, was welcomed by all. New play equipment, including swings, provided students with the very best for both fun and safety when exercising their brains and bodies!

When students, parents, and visitors enter the building, the warm atmosphere welcomes them immediately to a place where children will learn how to read, write, and compute in a place of excellence combined with care and compassion of the highest level. Knight's staff is comprised of dedicated professionals with a wide variety of backgrounds. Through the years every continent except Antarctica has been represented by the staff. As changes are embraced by the school and community, the staff searches for ways to combine strengths, recognize weaknesses, and use this information to improve teaching and learning for all our students.

Knight continues to be a bright "star" in the education community. In 2015–16, it was awarded a \$25,000 grant by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) as part of its Success in Schools project. The Success in Schools project highlights schools of excellence throughout the state as part of a partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting. That same year, it also served as a school site for the 2016 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Conference, hosting educators from over the world to highlight effective instructional practices. The school also was named a 2016-2017 High Progress Reward School by the Georgia Department of Education. A High Progress School is among the 10 percent of the state's Title I schools making the most progress in improving the performance of the "all students" group over three years on the statewide assessments. In addition to these honors, students and teams of students have experienced success in the classroom and through extracurricular programs like Readers Rally, Odyssey of the Mind, Wizzle Pro, and the school's broadcast studio.

Continuing the Knight tradition is an ongoing challenge as the school's staff and students continue to strive for excellence in all that they do each and every day. The long-used motto "**Star Light! Star Bright! Everyone can be a STAR at Knight!**" serves to remind this learning community that although much has changed since the school opened in 1975, the school's focus on its students remains constant.