

History of

J. A. Alford Elementary School

James Arthur Alford, son of James Alvin Alford and Emma Kelley Alford, was born in the Bethesda Community on February 24, 1894. The fourth of nine children, young Arthur, along with his brothers and sisters, attended the original Bethesda School, located next to the Bethesda United Methodist Church.

Education was important to the Alford family. All of the children attended college, with the older siblings supporting the younger ones. Arthur attended Georgia Tech, and served in the Navy during World War I before returning to the classroom as a teacher.

Arthur taught at his alma mater, Bethesda School, as did brother Walter and sister Alice. All of J. A. Alford's children and grandchildren attended the school, and his daughter, Carolyn Beaty, taught at the original Bethesda School for 19 years. During World War II, Arthur's wife, Celia, helped to organize a Victory Garden to grow food for the school lunchroom.

In addition to teaching, Arthur served as comptroller for a chain of general merchandise stores that he oper-

FAST FACTS	
Address:	2625 Lawrenceville Highway Lawrenceville, GA 30044
The following have served as principals of J. A. Alford Elementary School:	
2003–2007	Laurie Allison
2007–Nov. 30, 2010	Monica Batiste
Dec. 1, 2010–Present	Dr. Sebastian “Shon” Davis
School Colors:	Red and Blue
School Mascot:	Stars

ated with his brothers and sisters. Stores were located in Gloster, Lawrenceville, Lilburn, Loganville, Scottdale, Fayetteville, Palmetto, Douglasville, and Duluth. The Gloster store, where Arthur often worked, was the only general store between Lawrenceville and Lilburn. People came from miles around for everything they needed from seeds to food to clothing. If the customers didn't have



enough money to cover their purchases, Arthur worked with them to trade goods and services so they might get the store-bought items they needed. The store also housed the post office, so it was the center of life in the Gloster community.

A leader in his community, Arthur was chairman of the Gwinnett County Board of Education and director of the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce. He was instrumental in opening the school that now serves the community in which he lived, the present-day Bethesda Elementary-- donating land, timber, and other materials for the school. In addition, Arthur provided financial support to build the gym at the school.

As an educator, community leader, businessman, and native son, Mr. James Arthur Alford (1894-1949) made significant and lasting contributions to the community that is served by J. A. Alford Elementary School which opened in August 2003. The school's official dedication occurred in October of 2003.

In 2015–16, the school served approximately 900 students. That same year, the school transitioned to a new cluster as a result of redistricting. The school moved from the Berkmar Cluster to join the new Discovery Cluster that year. As a result, the school's colors and mascot changed from the red, white, and blue Stars to the lime green and navy Titans.

