

# History of

## Graves Elementary School

Graves Elementary School opened its doors to students in August of 2015, serving more than 1,300 students in its charter year. The school opened as a relief school in the Meadowcreek Cluster, pulling many students, along with its principal from Nesbit Elementary School. Graves held its dedication ceremony on October 25, 2015, celebrating the school's theme "Creating Opportunities, Discovering Dreams, and Challenging Realities." As part of the ceremony, Anna Graves, the daughter of Avery Graves the man for whom the school is named, brought remarks from the Graves family.

Graves Elementary School bears the name of a man whose family began leaving its mark on the Norcross area of Gwinnett County in 1876. Avery Anderson Graves was born August 9, 1909, on the farm owned by his parents, George William Graves and Hattie Leola Pursell. Located on Graves Road, the farm was part of a larger tract owned by his grandfather, George L. Graves, whose son, Joseph, inherited the land on which the school stands. Close to the site is the historical Hightower Trail, a path used by Native Americans traveling to Stone Mountain, as well as Graves Road Park.

Avery Graves, like his mother, attended Glover School (also known as Glover Baptist Church) located on Jimmy Carter Boulevard near Singleton Road. He graduated from Decatur Middle School in 1927 and Norcross High School in 1929. While in high school he was often asked to assist in teaching, and upon graduation the Gwinnett County Board of Education offered him a position at

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 1700 Graves Road  
Norcross, GA 30093

The following have served as principals of Graves Elementary School:  
2015–Present      Clayborn Knight

**School Colors:** Carolina Blue, Navy, and White  
**School Mascot:** Mustang

Glover School, where he taught until 1934.

On May 25, 1930, Mr. Graves married Ava Myrtle Dickens, also an alumnus of Glover School and Norcross High. They began their marriage on the Graves farm and returned to it as their final home in 1959. Their five children all attended schools where Mr. Graves was either a teacher, the principal, or the school superintendent.

After completing a brief teacher's program at what is now the University of West Georgia, Mr. Graves attended North Georgia College, where he played on the baseball team. In 1938, he earned his Bachelor of Education degree from Oglethorpe University. Following World War II he attended the University of Georgia, primarily during summer recess and on Saturdays, earning his Master's degree in Education in August 1949.

Mr. Graves had a diverse academic and military career. He taught at Grayson School in Gwinnett County from



### GRAVES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Gwinnett County Board of Education  
Daniel D. Seckinger, Chairman  
Dr. Mary Kay Murphy, Vice Chairman  
Carole Boyce  
Dr. Robert "Bob" McClure  
Louise Radloff

CEO/Superintendent  
J. Alvin Wilbanks

Architect  
Cunningham Forehand Matthews & Moore  
Architects, Inc.

Contractor  
Carroll Daniel Construction Company

2015

1934 to 1936 and coached boys' and girls' basketball, despite having little experience as a player. He then taught and coached at Avondale High School in DeKalb County for two years before being named principal of Murphy-Candler School, a new DeKalb elementary and junior high school. Mr. Graves left the school during World War II to serve in the American Red Cross from 1942 to 1943. He was assigned to the Army's 8th Infantry Division, principally serving soldiers with personal problems while on training maneuvers. Mr. Graves worked as a teacher and coach at Tucker School (elementary and high) for school year 1943-44 until joining the Army as a chaplain in late 1944. He served on board a Navy transport ship that returned POW's to Europe and brought American soldiers home. In 1946, Mr. Graves transitioned to the Georgia Army National Guard where he served as a chaplain until his retirement with the rank of Major.

Mr. Graves returned to Tucker School as principal from 1946 to 1951, when he was named superintendent of Calhoun (GA) City Schools. In Calhoun he advocated for improved resources for students in the African-American school, taught classes to WWII veterans at night, continued serving with the Red Cross, and was an active member of First Baptist Church and the Rotary Club. In 1959, he returned to the family farm and sold educational materials until the Lilburn School community approached him in 1961 about a critical need for accreditation of the school. As its principal, Mr. Graves implemented major improvements and elementary students' test scores immediately rose. He left Lilburn School in 1965 and resumed selling educational resources statewide for many years. Real estate and working with churches became the focal points of his activity into retirement.

Ordained a Baptist minister in the mid-1930s, Mr. Graves was a bi-vocational minister for a number of churches in Gwinnett and Henry counties and was known especially for his commitment to the prison ministries. Always active in the communities where he lived, Mr. Graves received many awards and recognitions during his lifetime, including nomination for Gwinnett Citizen of

the Year and induction into the Georgia Lions Club Hall of Fame. He was a significant promoter of the Norcross Baseball Hall of Fame, having grown up in the glory days when Norcross boasted the most professional baseball players drafted per capita of any city in America.

Graves Elementary School honors the legacy of Avery Anderson Graves – educator, soldier, minister, businessman – and a family that holds a prominent place in the history of southwestern Gwinnett County. It does so in many ways. First, the school kicked off the G-DART program which integrates arts into the core subjects to increase student achievement. Specifically, the program focuses on the following artistic disciplines— Dance, Art, Rhythm, and Theatre. Other first year programs included the establishment of an Elementary-to-Academy Pipeline with Meadowcreek High, working to prepare students for success beyond elementary school by exposing students to career



**AVERY ANDERSON GRAVES**  
1909–2005

lessons, and the launch of the Commitment to Graduate Program in which 5th grade students pledge to graduate from high school on time. Other first-year highlights include the school's Robotics Team winning 1st place in Presentation in the FIRST LEGO League regional competition and Graves being named a National Junior Beta Club of Distinction.

The school has established partnerships with SCANA Energy, Georgia Tech, and Corporate Specialty Insignia. In addition, the school works closely with parents to offer students academic and extracurricular opportunities. For example, students have the opportunity to participate in a number of clubs, including Drama, Dancing Dreams, Discovering Dancers, FIRST LEGO League Robotics Team, National Junior Beta Club, Student Council, Chorus, Poetry Club, Young Entrepreneurs, Talent Show, Mustang Running Club, and Girls on the Run.