

History of

J. E. Richards Middle School

J.E. Richards Middle opened its doors to 1,470 students on August 24, 1987. Built to relieve overcrowding at Five Forks, Lawrenceville, and Sweetwater middle schools, construction at Richards began in April 1986, and Gwinnett County's 13th middle school was completed just before opening at a cost of 3.6 million dollars.

Richards was named in honor of James Everett Richards, an outstanding Gwinnett educator for 17 years. Mr. Richards became principal of Norcross High School in 1957 after several years of teaching and leadership. During his years as a high school principal, Richards realized the need to mold work habits and character in students during their transitional middle school years. In 1969, Mr. Richards became the first principal of Lawrenceville Middle School, which opened in 1971.

Sadly, Mr. Richards' tenure as principal was cut short by a tragic automobile accident on February 2, 1972, and he died on September 21, 1972. His wife, Mrs. Vinnie Richards, had been an active supporter of the school since 1987 until her passing in the fall of 2005. During the dedication ceremony for RMS in 1987, Principal John Ford said of Mr. Richards, "Knowing the goals of J. E. Richards genuinely gives our school positive direction and an inspiration by which we can aspire to achieve."

Richards Middle has experienced enormous change

FAST FACTS

Address: 3555 Sugarloaf Parkway
Lawrenceville, GA 30044

The following have served as principals of J. E. Richards Middle School:

1987–1990	John Ford
1990–1997	Georgia Barnwell
1997–1998	Michael Grzeskiewicz
1998–2003	Gary Bahn
2003–2008	Judy Stephens
2008–2010	Reginald Kirkland
2010–Present	Mark McCain

School Colors: Blue, Green and Gray

School Mascot: Titans

in its near 30-year history. Originally set among forests and farmland at 600 Houston Road, Richards has seen its surroundings change as the area grew up around it. In 1995, the school's mailing address became 3555 Sugarloaf Parkway when Houston Road was consolidated with Johnson Road, Davis Mill Road, and Atkinson Road to become four-lane Sugarloaf Parkway. The only remnant of Houston Road is the now unnamed access road connecting the entrances of Richards and Cedar Hill



Elementary to Sugarloaf Parkway.

Richards has grown as well; the building has more than doubled in size with new additions built in 1989, 2001, and 2005. Originally 40 classrooms, RMS expanded to over 100 classrooms to accommodate over 2,400 students in 2006. During the summer of 2007, the school's facade was updated and the school's technology was retrofitted to include updated computers, wireless labs, as well as new software and networks.

RMS has also experienced changes in identity. Once a feeder school for Central Gwinnett, Berkmar, and Brookwood high schools, Richards then became part of the Central Gwinnett Cluster, feeding only Central Gwinnett High. The blue and white Rams of 1987 became Black Knights in 1997. Richards had up to five elementary feeder schools through the 2010-2011 school year: Cedar Hill, Jenkins, Lawrenceville, Margaret Winn Holt, and Simonton elementary schools. In 2011, Moore Middle School opened in the Central Gwinnett Cluster, helping to relieve Richards' growing student population down to 1450 students.

With the start of the 2015-2016 school year, Richards became the sole middle school feeder for the new Discovery High School. Richards has four feeder schools in the Discovery Cluster. They are Alford, Baggett, Benefield, and Cedar Hill elementary schools. The mascot once again changed, to the "Titans". And Richards adopted the new Discovery Cluster colors of Blue, Green, and Grey. And Richards' student population once again blossomed to over 2000 students.

While RMS has had an ever-changing history, some things about Richards have remained the same. One of those is the generosity of the faculty and students who have for many years made strong contributions to fundraising for United Way and Relay for Life. The passion and compassion of the Richards staff is unparalleled and the school is often heralded as a "special place to teach and work". Several former students have returned as faculty, working alongside those who originally inspired them to teach.

Through many changes and challenges, Richards continues to successfully blend a diverse and large group of students from across the country and around the world, into a positive community of learners.

