

History of

Benefield Elementary School

Benefield Elementary School was named for J. W. Benefield, former Gwinnett School Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Benefield served in that capacity from 1967–77. He was born in the Dacula-Harbins area and graduated from the University of Georgia. He began his 26-year career in education in 1950 as an agriculture teacher at Bethesda High School and Central Gwinnett High School. In 1977, he was named “Outstanding School Superintendent of the Year” by the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders. Also, he is a member of the Gwinnett County Association of Educators’ Hall of Fame.

Benefield Elementary was originally located adjacent to Oakland Center at 970 McElvaney Lane in Lawrenceville. In fact, the lunchroom was actually shared by the two schools. The concept of its location was that it would be beneficial for the special education students at Oakland to associate with the regular education students at Benefield Elementary. Over the years, both student populations profited from the joined school.

The school opened in August of 1982. It opened to relieve growth in the areas served by Lawrenceville Elementary, Gwin Oaks Elementary, Dyer Elementary, Bethesda Elementary, and B.B. Harris Elementary.

During the late 1980s (1987–88), Benefield had the distinction of being the largest elementary school in Georgia. The enrollment in 1986–87 was 1,450 children in grades K–5. In 1987–88, the enrollment was 1,450

FAST FACTS

Address: 1221 Old Norcross Road
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

The following have served as principals of Benefield Elementary School:

1982–88	Allen Bower
1988–1994	Ann Adams
1994–2000	Larry Smith
2000–2005	Barbara Hopkins
2005–2010	Ronald Boyd
2010–2015	Dr. Melissa Walker
2015–Present	Shonda Stevens

School Colors: White and Blue

School Mascot: Lighthouse

students in grades K–4. The fifth-grade students were housed at Richards Middle School during that school year, due to lack of space at Benefield.

Benefield’s staff has earned numerous awards over the years, including a staff member who was named Georgia Science Teacher of the Year.

J. W. Benefield Elementary School

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Gwinnett County Board of Education

Louise Radloff - Chairman

Carole Boyce - Vice Chairman

Dr. Robert McClure

Dr. Mary Kay Murphy

Daniel D. Seekinger

CEO/Superintendent

J. Alvin Wilbanks

Architect

Lindsay, Pope, Brayfield & Assoc., Inc.

Contractor

Hensler & Beavers General Contractors, Inc.

2008



The Benefield school mascot was changed in 2001 from the Buccaneer to a Lighthouse. The school colors were also changed from light and dark blue to red, white and blue to coordinate with other schools in the Berkmar cluster.

In August of 2007, Oakland School moved from the 970 McElvaney Lane address in Lawrenceville which it shared with Benefield students to a new location. The move offered Benefield Elementary students and staff additional facility space until a replacement elementary school was completed for the 2008–09 school year.

In 2008, Benefield Elementary relocated to its current location of 1221 Old Norcross Road in Lawrenceville. When Benefield opened in 2008, the Reading Recovery training site was moved from Oakland School to the new Benefield Elementary. The training site has two full-size classrooms and a one-way observation glass. Over the past 20 years, Reading Recovery has trained 270 teachers to impact more than 13,000 students.

In 2013 and 2014, two teachers from Benefield were named Georgia Master Teachers, a recognition based on excellence of student achievement and growth. Benefield has received numerous academic honors over the years, including being named a Distinguished Title I School and receiving High Progress High Rewards status for the high performance of students on state assessments.

Benefield joined the Discovery Cluster for the 2015–2016 school year, joining the new Discovery High School, Richards Middle School, Alford Elementary School, Baggett Elementary School, and Cedar Hill Elementary. In becoming a part of the new cluster, Benefield underwent its third mascot and color change in its history. Benefield's new mascot is the Titan with school colors of grey, navy blue, and green.



J.W. Benefield served as superintendent of Gwinnett County Public Schools from 1967 to 1977. After his retirement, he continued to support the school system and the community through his volunteer efforts. Mr. Benefield passed away on December 30, 2011.