

History of

North Gwinnett High School

Built to consolidate Suwanee and Sugar Hill High Schools, North Gwinnett High School was established in 1958. Located at 20 Level Creek Road between the cities of Sugar Hill and Suwanee it occupies the site of a former cotton field. Several sites for the school were considered before the final selection was made from land donated by the Tom Robinson estate. In fact, a special ceremony was held prior to the North Gwinnett-Buford football game in 1981 to dedicate the football field to the memory and legacy of Tom Robinson. At that ceremony, the football field became the “Tom Robinson Memorial Stadium.”

The original North Gwinnett High School had 13 classrooms. Staff members included a principal, a librarian, and 11 teachers. The principal was John W. Bagwell, the librarian was Frances Parsons and the teachers were O. L. Vickery, Mrs. M. C. McDaniel, Kenneth McDaniel, Mary White, Hugh Alexander, Geneva S. Stewart, Dewey Bailey, Garnet Craig, Helen Converse, Evelyn Walden, and Alice Jordan.

The Bulldog mascot and the school colors of red, black and white were suggested shortly after the school opened in 1958 by the North Gwinnett cheerleaders and senior class officers, and was approved by the principal. Those same cheerleaders also wrote and composed the fight song and the Alma Mater which is still in use today.

FAST FACTS

Address: 20 Level Creek Road
Suwanee, GA 30024

The following have served as principals of North Gwinnett High School:

1958–69	John W. Bagwell
1969–73	Kenneth McDaniel
1973–98	Dr. Franklin Lewis
1998–2008	Dr. John Green
2008–Nov. 2013	Ed Shaddix
Nov. 2013–Present	Nathan Ballentine

School Colors: Red, Black, and White

School Mascot: Bulldogs

In 1960, the school had 328 students in grades eight through 12. There were 67 seniors. Lanier Middle School was completed during the 1973–74 school year, and the eighth grade transferred there from North Gwinnett. During the 1973–74 school year, North Gwinnett had a total of 606 students and 144 graduating seniors. Growth has been steady at North Gwinnett over the years. In the 80s, the school enrollment topped 1,000 for the first



A new entrance to the school was built and a three-story addition opened in August of 2014.

time and there were 234 graduating seniors. The 90s saw extensive growth as the population doubled to a size of 2000 students. North Gwinnett's population reached a high of 3500 during the 2008-2009 school year before the opening of several new high school schools. Today, North serves more than 2,800 students with a senior population of approximately 600.

As the student body grew, so too did the size of our physical plant. Following the initial construction in 1958, there was a small addition in 1962 that included six classrooms. A larger wing with seven classrooms and two laboratories was completed in 1965. In 1977, a new addition was completed at the front of the school which included

four offices, a new media center, expanded cafeteria facilities, and six classrooms. Prior to the 1981-82 school year, air conditioning was installed in all classrooms, and a football field, track, and press box were built. A field house was completed during the 1984-85 school year.

A significant addition was made to North Gwinnett High as part of a 1988 school bond issue when a new theater, expanded band and choral rooms, and three classrooms were added. Later, seven new classrooms, a home economics lab, a business education labs, art classrooms, offices, and expanded dining facilities were added. Between 1999 and 2005, two major additions were completed which added total of 62 new classrooms in a two-story addition at the corner of Level Creek and Suwanee Dam Road and a new gym.

As the population of Suwanee and North Gwinnett High School continued to increase through the 2000s and 2010s, more classrooms were needed. In the Spring of 2012, many of the original buildings from the 1950s and 1960s were demolished to make room for a three-story classroom building which included dozens of modern classrooms, an updated Collaborative Learning/Media Center, and a new office suite. In addition, the Level Creek entrance to the school was reconfigured and updated, and the field house was renovated.

North Gwinnett has had only six principals in its school history. The first was John W. Bagwell, who served from 1958-69. He was the head girls' basketball coach

from 1958-67. The late Mr. Bagwell's last few years were spent in the county office.

The second principal was Kenneth McDaniel, who served from 1969-73. He came to North Gwinnett when the school opened as a teacher and served as the boys' basketball and baseball coach. He served in this capacity



North Gwinnett High School's facility through the years has grown to serve its growing population. However, tradition and bulldog pride are still mainstays in the community.

from 1958-68. He left North Gwinnett in 1973 to work full-time with the Georgia National Guard. He retired as Brigadier General, and served as Assistant Adjutant General for the state of Georgia and commander of the Army National Guard.

The school's third principal, Franklin F. Lewis, served from 1973 until 1998. He received his doctorate in education from

the University of Georgia in 1977. A large majority of the growth and the building programs were experienced during his tenure. Mr. Lewis launched an American Education Week celebration that has grown over the years and has become a platform to honor community members and educators who have made a difference in the schools in this area of the county.

Dr. John Green became the fourth principal of North Gwinnett in 1998 and opened a new two-story addition at the school that same year. Dr. Green received his undergraduate degree from the University of Tennessee, and his graduate level degrees from Georgia State University, and the University of Georgia. Dr. Green left North Gwinnett to assume an area superintendent's position at the county level.

Mr. Ed Shaddix began his tenure as the North Gwinnett High School Principal in 2007. During his time at NGHS the school experienced tremendous growth in Advanced Placement course participation and leadership development for students. During his six years at North Gwinnett, academic, performing/visual arts, and athletic performance levels reached heights never before experienced in school history. Mr. Shaddix left North Gwinnett in November 2013 when he was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Gwinnett County Public Schools.

On November 18, 2013, Mr. Nathan Ballantine became North Gwinnett's sixth principal. Mr. Ballantine

came to North from Norcross High School where he was a 14-year veteran teacher and assistant principal. Mr. Ballantine's focusing on maintaining a positive learning environment--one in which North Gwinnett students can continue to be successful as they prepare for their post-secondary plans.

Many changes have occurred during the years since North Gwinnett High School opened in 1958.

- At one time, the assistant principal and math department chair also served as the school custodians.
- Up until 1973, North Gwinnett had only one custodian for the entire school and campus. In 2014-2015, the school has 24 custodians.
- The original sports program consisted of Basketball (boys and girls) and Baseball. The school now offers Football, Cross Country (girls and boys), Competitive Cheerleading, Softball, Basketball (boys and girls), Wrestling, Baseball, Track and Field (girls and boys), Tennis (girls and boys), Soccer (girls and boys), Volleyball, Swimming and Diving (girls and boys), Lacrosse (boys and girls), Golf (girls and boys), and Air Rifery (girls and boys).
- NGHS students also participate on a non-school sponsored equestrian, fencing, and ice hockey teams.
- North Gwinnett athletics teams have earned countless regional/area titles and have earned team state championships in Softball, Competitive Cheerleading, Cross Country, and Soccer. Individual athletes have won state championships in Track and Field and Wrestling.
- The NGHS Equestrian Team won the National High School Championship in 2010.
- The football program was started in 1961 with a JV schedule. Coach Clark Hill was the first football coach at North Gwinnett.
- NGHS has two Gwinnett County Public Schools' Teachers of the Year. Nathan Smelley was the first teacher ever named Gwinnett County Public Schools' Teacher of the Year, and Wendell Jackson was named Gwinnett County Public Schools' Teacher of the Year in the early 80's.
- Gwinnett County Relay for Life is the largest international site for Relay for Life. For a number of years, North has been the #1 fundraising team in Gwinnett County. We also are the #1

fundraising high school nationally. North has raised over half a million dollars, with 2015 being our record year raising over \$135,000 for the American Cancer Society. North Gwinnett's Relay for Life team is student-led by an executive and advisory board who plan the annual events, theme, and contribute hundreds of service hours to make our school's fundraising effort so successful.

- North Gwinnett offers 26 Advanced Placement Classes. During the 2013-2014 school year, 2700 AP courses were taken by approximately 1400 students.
- All leadership programs for students are student written, planned and led. These programs include: Freshmen Expectations 101 (orientation for 9th graders), Freshmen Mentoring, North Gwinnett Student Leadership Team, Peer Leadership, Student Athlete Leadership Team, and Student Council.

North Gwinnett remains committed to the belief that all students can learn at high levels and that all students can be leaders. College preparatory coursework is the minimum level of expectation and participation in more challenging courses is strongly encouraged and expected with the goal that every student will take at least one Advanced Placement class while at North Gwinnett. Leadership at all levels is the cornerstone of North Gwinnett's Culture. As students learn to lead themselves and others, they become more independent learners—an essential quality as they enter adulthood. Leadership and academic achievement are intertwined, and North Gwinnett students excel in both.

