

History of

Walnut Grove Elementary School

Walnut Grove was named for a one room schoolhouse built around 1875 next to the Walnut Grove Baptist Church on Braselton Highway near Hi-Hope Road. The schoolhouse served students until 1911 when it was replaced by a new school. Sometime between 1911 and 1919 the family of one of its former students purchased the schoolhouse building and moved it to the family property at the corner of GA 316 and GA 20 in Lawrenceville. The building was used as a grist mill, then as a carpenter's shop. In 1986, the family donated the building to the Gwinnett Historical Society with the agreement to have the building moved and restored. It was opened for tours in 1994 after being moved to the Elisha Winn House in Dacula and restored by the Gwinnett Historical Society.

Walnut Grove opened its doors in the fall of 1992 with 9 trailers. Deanna Fraker was the first principal. She, along with assistant principals Sherry Farhy and Bron Gayna Schmit, hired "sparkling jewels" consisting primarily of teachers from within Gwinnett County Public Schools with very few new teachers hired.

The students and staff worked together for the first few weeks of school to choose the school colors, mascot, and motto. (In 2010, the mascot changed from the original Trailblazers to the Eagle as part of an initiative to unify all schools within the Collins Hill Cluster.)

FAST FACTS

Address: 75 Taylor Road
Suwanee, GA 30024

The following have served as principals of Walnut Grove Elementary School:

1992–1999	Dr. Deanna Fraker
1999–2004	Bron Gayna Schmit
2004–2006	Georgann Eaton
2006–2007	Dr. Kevin Bracher
2007–Dec. 2010	Nancy Morrison
Jan. 2011–May 2016	Stephanie Cortellino
June 2016–Present	Dr. Dale Pugh

School Colors: Green, Silver, White

School Mascot: Eagle

A mural was funded for the atrium through a combined effort of the PTA and school to recreate the atmosphere of life during the era of existence of the one room schoolhouse after which the school was named. The mural was originally painted by Carol Weaver of Murals and More along with the help of Walnut Grove students. The first fifth grade class researched the flag that is a part of the mural. The mural took several years to complete.



Students were rezoned from Suwanee and McKendree Elementary Schools to come to Walnut Grove.

The first Co-PTA presidents were Lynne Franks and Chris Peterson. They were instrumental in developing a very involved, positive and supportive parent group. In another combined effort, the PTA and school began a wonderful tradition which was named "Trailblazer Day." This was designed as a "fun day" for students with face painting, games, crafts, cake walk and the basket auction. It has continued to draw huge crowds over the years.

During the 1994–1995 school year Walnut Grove became the largest elementary school in the state with an enrollment of over 1,600 students.

The community has always been supportive with overwhelming volunteer hours shared by parents. At the time Walnut Grove opened, the Local School Advisory Committee (LSAC) was made up of parent and community members. The LSAC met at night on a monthly basis and addressed issues of importance to the community, school and school system. Everyone was invited, and often the meeting was moved to the cafeteria to house the crowds. Later, the School Council was developed, and meetings were held in the early mornings.

In 1998, Rock Springs Elementary School opened its doors giving Walnut Grove some much needed relief from an enrollment of over 1,800.

The Walnut Grove family has been greatly enriched by the diverse ethnic population brought to the school as a result of growth.

Thirty-two trailers were on the premises before the first new addition opened in the fall of 1999, providing additional classrooms and renovated front office space. A second addition was built in 2006 providing classrooms, computer labs, and office space, as well as an enlarged Media Center and cafeteria.

In 1999, Dr. Deanna Fraker retired, and assistant principal Bron Gayna Schmit became principal. Dr. Fraker remained on staff as a part-time assistant principal.

After Ms. Schmit transferred to Simpson Elementary School as principal in 2004, Georgann Eaton was named as the new principal. Mrs. Eaton served as principal until January of 2006 when Dr. Kevin Bracher became principal.

Dr. Bracher was followed by Nancy Morrison and

then Stephanie Cortellino. Upon the announcement of Mrs. Cortellino's retirement, the Board of Education named Dr. Dale Pugh as principal of the school.

Walnut Grove completed its 25th year in 2016–17 and is still going strong. In addition to outstanding academic programs, community support remains a hallmark of the school. The PTA continues to support all aspects of teaching and learning and provides funding for educational resources. For example, it raised more than \$27,000 through one campaign to fund the installation of a running/walking track around the playground. The PTA has earned numerous honors for excellence and its dedication to education, receiving the Outstanding Local Unit and Model PTA Award, the Georgia

PTA Oak Tree Membership Certificate for having 100% staff membership, the Visionary Award for having 400+ members before the last day of August, and the Family Bus Pass Membership Award.

New faces have come and gone, the facility has grown, and the Walnut Grove community has changed greatly over the years. Yet, some things have remained the same; Walnut Grove is still "Leading the Way". The school continues to be staffed by outstanding educators who seek to meet the needs of all children. With such a rich history, a bright future is anticipated at Walnut Grove with many more good days to come!

