

History of

Sycamore Elementary School

Sycamore Elementary is located at 5695 Sycamore Road in Sugar Hill, Georgia. The school opened in August 2003, with an enrollment of just under 800 students from Riverside and Sugar Hill elementary schools. The school is located on property that was previously a pasture used to raise horses for more than 30 years. Sycamore Elementary is named for the road on which it is located. The original facility consisted of 82,453 square feet and was built at a cost of \$5.6 million. Sycamore Elementary contained 40 regular classrooms, seven special education, ESOL, reading, and gifted classrooms, two technology labs, two music and art rooms, a cafeteria, a media center, and several offices with a conference room. The school also had a large gymnasium (8,000 square feet).

Sycamore Elementary celebrated its opening day with a flag-raising ceremony on August 3, 2003, with approximately 775 students in grades K–5 and 88 staff members participating. Students and staff eagerly began their charter year and enjoyed the beautiful facility and the new materials and equipment provided. Sycamore Elementary held its dedication ceremony on October 26, 2003, in the school cafeteria. Fourth grade student, Laura Joplin, opened the ceremony, singing “The Star Spangled Banner,” and CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks delivered the dedication address. Following a performance by the fourth and fifth grade chorus and a slide show

FAST FACTS

Address: 5695 Sycamore Rd.
Sugar Hill, GA 30518

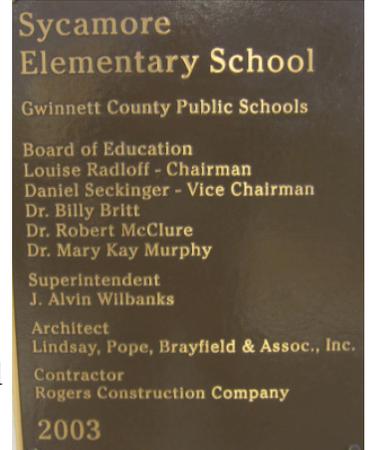
The following have served as principals of Sycamore Elementary School:

2003–06	Brenda Anderson
2006–2009	Wanda Law
2009–2012	Amy Bryan
2012–Present	Dr. Crystal Cooper

School Colors: Orange and Black

School Mascot: Huskies

entitled “We’ve Only Just Begun,” Principal Brenda Anderson, Superintendent Wilbanks, School Board Chairman Dr. Robert McClure, District II Board Member Daniel Seckinger, PTA President Terri Doolittle, Student Council President Hannah Bush, and staff member Pam Wilson



participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Approximately 500 guests enjoyed a reception after the dedication.

There are many admirable highlights in the school's history. For example, during her tenure as principal, Brenda Anderson was selected as PTA Principal of the Year, and she was recognized at the 100th Anniversary Convention in Atlanta. Sycamore continued to evolve positively over the years under the principalship of Wanda Law (2006–2009). The school's enrollment grew to its largest point, serving more than 1,300 students. This area of Gwinnett County continued to increase in population; a two-story addition was completed and opened in December 2006. In the 2007–2008 school year a World War II veteran participated in the school's annual Veterans Day Program and wrote a letter about his experience, stating, "Patriotism is alive at Sycamore Elementary School." Coverage of the event was featured on The Fox News Channel. In 2009, Amy Bryan became principal. Sycamore was recognized as a Georgia Title I Distinguished School for making AYP for seven consecutive years. The school received enrollment relief, opening with just under 700 students as White Oak Elementary School opened its doors. Sycamore Elementary was recognized as a Reaching Higher Green & Healthy School in the Environmental Achievement Awards sponsored by Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful. In 2012, Sycamore Elementary opened under its fourth principal, Dr. Crystal Cooper Thompson, who continued to lead the staff and students in creating a promising legacy. In the 2013–2014 school year, Dr. Cooper Thompson helped Sycamore celebrate its 10-year anniversary, welcoming several guests and supporters to honor a great history of achievements.

Since the 2012 school year, Sycamore has completed a new outdoor classroom, added new swings to the playground, and improved academically. Students have participated in leadership opportunities and various clubs. Clubs such as the "Orff"-estra, Dance Team, Student Council and Jr. Beta Club have allowed students to have a well-rounded view of school life. Staff and students have participated in community-based events, supported United Way and Relay for Life fundraisers. The Sycamore PTA continues to promote the homeschool-community connection through instructional activities and programs, including Skate Night, Bingo Night, Fall Carnival, Holiday Gift Shop, Donuts for Dads, and the annual 5th Grade Picnic.

Sycamore Elementary is committed to learning, leading, and succeeding. The school has a new crest which

embodies the pursuit of excellence. The school and its teachers have won several grants that support the purchase of essential school technology and supplies. Teachers continue to innovate and transform their teaching skills to promote a higher level of academic learning. Students are learning to use STEM and Project Based Learning (PBL) for alignment to College and Career Readiness. During the 2015–2016 school year, Sycamore welcomed students from the Buice School. These prekindergarten special needs students participated in all school activities and added a positive and welcomed experience to the school community. The school also launched the FLIP (Fostering Learning through Inquiry Projects) Academy for 4th and 5th grade students. Students complete projects, learn about producing for audiences, and integrate STEM and the sense of entrepreneurship into their daily lives.

Sycamore Elementary School continued to thrive and improve in several ways. In 2017, all of the Lanier Cluster schools were acknowledged as P21 Innovative schools for their high level of inquiry-based learning that has helped students to be more equipped for 21st century skills. Additionally, as a Title I school, Sycamore ES was awarded for having the "Greatest Gains" and as a Top 5% Title I school in Georgia under the Georgia CCRPI Accountability System.

The faculty and staff of Sycamore Elementary are dedicated, highly motivated, and well-qualified individuals. Several staff members have been at the school since it opened in 2003. Sycamore Elementary teachers are content experts who are committed to lifelong learning. Our teachers illustrate daily their genuine concern for each student and their success. Classroom teachers offer tutoring and lead various clubs outside of their teaching responsibilities. The Sycamore staff is a professional learning community and works together in a collaborative manner to promote teaching and learning and achieve annual school goals.

The Sugar Hill area continues to grow and is experiencing changes in its demographics. Those changes are evident in its schools. Sycamore Elementary has continued to grow, from serving just over 700 students in 2012 to more than 850 in 2018–2019. The school's student population in 2018 reflected the growing diversity of its community-- Asian (4%), Black (15%), Hispanic (41%), Caucasian (29%), multiracial (3%). Sycamore Elementary also has experienced a decreasing rate of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. In 2009, the school's percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch was 69%. By 2018–2019 that percentage

had decreased to 53%. Students in public schools are eligible for free or reduced price lunch if their family income meets eligibility requirements. Free or reduced lunch figures provide a measure of the economic status of the household. Over the last few years teachers have worked hard to learn strategies that meet the needs and challenge of our diverse population of students.

Sycamore Elementary is a culturally minded, child-centered school, and visitors often remark that the climate of love and caring can be felt throughout the building. This supports the philosophy of the school which always has been to provide a supportive and nurturing atmosphere that encourages an eagerness for learning and social growth. This philosophy serves the school and its students well as evidenced by the many accolades earned throughout its history. We strive to, “Learn, Lead, and Succeed,” each and every day.

As students move on to middle school they are equipped in understanding how positive behavior, leadership and resilience support them in becoming admired members of our community. The city of Sugar Hill and Sycamore Elementary are great places for students to thrive. We continue to see how our school aids students in soaring to extraordinary results.

