

# History of

## Riverside Elementary School

Riverside Elementary opened its doors for kindergarten through fifth grade students in August of 1999. The Riverside school district was created from rezoned areas of Suwanee Elementary School and Sugar Hill Elementary School. The original Riverside facility was built to house 935 students. However, when Riverside opened in the fall of 1999, over 200 additional students had registered to make the total over 1,151 students. Out of the 52 classes needed that first year, 20 would be housed in portable units.

The school held its official dedication ceremony on Sunday, October 17, 1999. The inspiration was provided by Riverside's 1999 Teacher of the Year Stephanie Arnette. The program provided the following overview about the new school:

“High on a hill in Suwanee sits Riverside Elementary School, overlooking magnificent mountains and Lake Lanier. The attractively designed school is perched only a stone's throw from the water's edge of the Chattahoochee River. Even though the river is invisible from the school, the splendid landscape creates an awe-inspiring connection between the school and its natural environment. Tall trees and thick, green shrubbery surround the 35-acre property, providing protection and privacy from the sprawling community.

“Our students are finding that Riverside is a great place to learn with its beautiful setting, access to technology, and state-of-the-art facilities. With an eye on the future and the

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 5445 Settles Bridge Road  
Suwanee, GA 30024

The following have served as principals of Riverside Elementary School:

1999–2001	Dr. Larry Stone
2002–Nov. 2013	Dr. Craig Barlow
Dec. 2013–Present	Ben Pope

**School Colors:** Red, White, and Blue

**School Mascot:** Rocket

possibilities in the coming century, our staff— made up of 52 classroom teachers, 44 support staff, and three administrators— is laying the groundwork of growth and pursuit of knowledge and skills that the school's 1,151 students will bring into our rapidly evolving world. As the fourth elementary school of the North Gwinnett Cluster, Riverside was planned and

### RIVERSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Board of Education  
Robert McClure, Chairman  
Mary Kay Murphy, Vice Chairman  
Billy Britt  
Louise Radloff  
Daniel Seckinger

Superintendent  
J. Alvin Wilbanks

Architect  
Lindsay ♦ Pope ♦ Brayfield & Associates

Contractor  
Salloum Construction Co.

1999



built to educate children far into the 21st century.

“As it has been said, ‘With our feet on the ground and our head in the stars, we are able to achieve greatness.’ For our Riverside Rockets, the sky is the limit as we follow our school motto each day: ‘Learning with Pride at Riverside.’”

For the first four years (1999–2003), the demographics of Riverside Elementary showed little change. For the 2001–02 and 2002–03 school years, Riverside was the largest elementary school in Gwinnett County, as well as one of the largest elementary schools in the southeastern section of the United States. For the 2002–03 school year, the Riverside student population topped 1,900.

Prior to the 2003–04 school year, more than 300 of Riverside’s students were rezoned to attend the newly opened Sycamore Elementary School and an additional 100 students were zoned to Parsons Elementary. In the fall of the 2004–05 school year, 800 more students were zoned to the new Level Creek Elementary School. By the beginning of the 2005–06 school year, the student population was again on the rise. Today’s enrollment sits just above 1,000 students.

Since opening in 1999, the school’s students and staff have garnered numerous awards. Riverside awards include: 2004–05 Georgia School of Excellence, 2005–06 Governor’s Platinum School, 2006–07 Governor’s Gold School. More recently, the school was ranked #4 in the state (out of 1,299 elementary schools on the 2013 Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment. And the following

year Riverside was ranked #1 in the state for the highest percentage of students scoring in the Exceeds Standards level on the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment. Future Problem Solving teams from the school have done well at the state and even international levels.

Riverside was an eCLASS pilot school and uses technology to support instruction and transformation within the classroom.

Community service continues to be a top priority for Riverside students. The school’s holiday food drive with the North Gwinnett Co-op, Toys for Tots, and January’s coat drive with Shadowbrook Baptist Church are just a few examples. Individual service projects also benefited the community throughout the school year. Fifth grade students have focused their service work on projects like creating Buddy Benches for the playground. And Riverside’s Relay For Life team raises thousands of dollars each year to fight cancer, fund research, and support those battling the disease, making Riverside one of the top GCPS elementary school Relay teams.

Coinciding with the school’s focus on community service has been its initiative to grow young leaders. For example, Riverside students took ownership of their learning and behavior during the school’s “Be The Leader” initiative in which students kept track of their progress using their data notebooks, and showed their leadership skills during our student-led parent conferences. Just as they did when the school opened in 1999, today’s students are learning with pride at Riverside.