

History of

Snellville Middle School

Snellville Middle School, located at 3155 East Pate Road in Snellville, was originally located on Main Street in Snellville. In 1969–70, the “Old Stone School Building,” as it was affectionately called, had been converted to the first middle school (grades six through eight) in Gwinnett County. Later, during the 1973–74 school year, the old structure was torn down, and Snellville Middle School changed to its present location. In 1988–89, with the passing of a bond referendum, a new addition housing 23 classrooms relieved the school of its 18 portable classrooms.

The old stone school building had been built in 1922 of local granite donated by Ellen Snell Johnson and quarried at Baker’s Rock Quarry near Snellville. Local men on two horse wagons hauled the granite to the building. The school opened in 1923 and was called Snellville Consolidated High School.

Many conveniences were not available in 1922 when the school was built. Electricity did not come to Snellville until 1938. A generator in the basement provided the lighting for the school. On every evening occasion the lights would go out at least once.

The heating system was coal burning pot-bellied stoves in each classroom. Pupils were responsible for keeping the coalscuttles full from the coal pile located in

FAST FACTS

Address: 3155 Pate Road
Snellville, GA 30078

The following have served as principals of Snellville Middle School:

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| 1969–89 | Reid Mullins |
| 1989–2000 | Dr. K. Michael Moody |
| 2000–03 | William Tinkler |
| 2003–2009 | Linda Boyd |
| 2009–Dec., 2010 | Susan Downs |
| Jan., 2011– Oct., 2012 | Eric Thigpen |
| Oct. 2012–Present | Katise Menchan |

School Colors: Blue and White

School Mascot: Comets

the school’s grounds. The superintendent, teachers, and older boys built the fires on winter mornings; however, Elizabeth Williams, a third-grade teacher in the ‘40s, remembers, “It was not unusual to come to my classroom and find a warm fire going, started by one of my eight-year-old boys.”

For many years, high school boys served as bus



drivers. There were no paved roads until 1936, when Highway 78 was paved from Stone Mountain to Snellville. In rainy weather, the roads became muddy and slippery. Colbert Brannan, a member of the class of 1930, recalls, "When the weather was bad and the roads were muddy, the superintendent would send junior and senior boys on the bus routes. If the bus started to slide into a ditch, we would get off the bus and push it back in the road. We also pushed the bus up the hills when it was too slippery to make it on its own."

In 1936, an article from the Gwinnett Journal stated that the Snellville community has accomplished much through the cooperative efforts of the people in the area. A granite canning plant was constructed on the school property and was designed to meet all the canning needs of each family in the community. At this time, the addition to the building, a combination auditorium/gymnasium and four classrooms, had just been completed under President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA) program. The people working toward this project had donated a great deal of labor and materials.

After the government passed the School Lunchroom Program, the basement under the old auditorium, the former canning plant, was converted into a lunchroom in 1939. The PTA, with WPA help, operated the lunchroom. Students paid five cents per day for their lunches or else brought commodities and were given credit at market prices. The PTA ladies who worked in the lunchroom did not receive pay but were compensated in lunches for their school children. Vera Nash was the first lunchroom manager. She was followed by Essie Mansfield, Edna Cofer and Josie Bankston.

In 1939, a drive was initiated to secure additional books for the school library. Under the leadership of Miss Wilie D. O'Kelly and W. C. Britt, and through publicity given the drive by the Atlanta papers, numerous books were donated. When the count was made, it was found that an untold wealth of books had been bestowed upon the school.

The school built a small residence near the canning plant in the early 1940s. This was first occupied by the agriculture teacher. In 1948, the school purchased some old army barracks, and one small residence and one duplex apartment were built. The rent from these houses provided some income for the school.

In 1953, due to increased enrollment, property adjacent to the school was purchased; the dwelling thereon was converted into classrooms for the second

grade. In 1954, it was necessary to further expand. A building was bought when Lawson General Hospital in Atlanta was dismantled, and this structure was used for the third grade.

In the fall of 1957, Grayson High School and Snellville High School combined in a new location, forming South Gwinnett High School. After 35 years of experience, the Snellville High School building was renovated and, along with a new brick addition, became Snellville Elementary School for students in grades one through eight. A hot water heating system was installed, replacing the pot-bellied stoves. Indoor restrooms were provided. The new brick addition to the building consisted of a teachers' lounge, two restrooms, clinic, principal's office, storage room, library, one classroom and a spacious modern lunchroom.

Mrs. Elizabeth Williams, a teacher there, described the opening: "In the fall of 1957, when Snellville Elementary School opened its doors to approximately 450 students in grades one through eight, the setting seemed ideal. There was so much wonderful room! There were new hardwood floors, new indoor plumbing, a new lunchroom fully equipped, some new buses, and bright new paint everywhere. The PTA put new shrubbery around the building and the grounds were landscaped. There were new uniforms for the eighth-grade athletic teams no longer just high school leftovers."

Troy Thomason was the principal of Snellville Elementary School for the 12 years it existed. Mr. Thomason, a native of Douglas County, Georgia, graduated from Snellville High School. He attended the University of Alabama, and received AB and master of education degrees from Oglethorpe University. He taught in Centerville and Sugar Hill schools and was principal both at Centerville and Suwanee high schools. He came to Snellville High School in 1946 as a math teacher and served as principal during its last term, 1956-57.

For the first time, seventh and eighth grades were departmentalized and teaching specialized. Extracurricular activities were a vital part of the school's program. Another first in Snellville school history was the employing of a school secretary.

Mr. Troy, as teachers and students called him, provided the best for this school. During this time, federal funds became available on a matching basis. Mr. Troy was able to take full advantage of this federal program with the assistance of a supportive PTA. The PTA held many projects to raise the needed funds. If funds were not readily available, Mr. Troy would use his

own money, assured to be reimbursed by the PTA. These funds provided a variety of audiovisual equipment for the school.

Under Mr. Troy's leadership, teachers and students alike took pride in the appearance of the school and grounds. The State Board of Education periodically checked and scored housekeeping in the schools. Snellville Elementary scored 100 percent for two years, an almost impossible feat anytime, but especially in a building now over 40 years old.

Growth was occurring rapidly in south Gwinnett County. A new elementary school was built in the Mountain Park area. It opened in 1967, drawing its entire enrollment from Snellville Elementary School. Students in this area could now attend school closer to their homes.

As growth continued in the Snellville area, it became apparent that another school was needed. In 1969, construction was completed on a new elementary school for grades one through five. This new school, located on Skyland Drive across from South Gwinnett High School, was named for educator W. C. Britt. Mr. Thomason came to W. C. Britt Elementary as principal, bringing many of his faculty and staff with him. The old granite building then became the first middle school in Gwinnett County.

When Snellville Middle School first opened in 1969, students came from W. C. Britt Elementary and the Mountain Park and Norris Lake areas. The flaming five-pointed star is the emblem used for the Comets of Snellville Middle. The Comets name was derived from the Comets at South Gwinnett High School. The Snellville Middle School Comets have blue and white as their school colors.

Reid Mullins served as the first principal of Snellville Middle School, providing leadership at the school for 20 years. From its beginnings, Snellville Middle has benefitted from strong leadership. Following Mr. Mullins as principal were Dr. Michael Moody, William Tinkler, Linda Boyd, Susan Downs, Eric Thigpen, and Katise Menchan.

As Gwinnett County continued to grow, so did Snellville. As a result, renovations were made to the building. Additions were made to the school in 1975 when a new gym was built. 1989 and 1992 brought more classroom additions to the facility. In the summer of 2004, renovations were made enlarging Snellville Middle's media center and cafeteria. The media center was enlarged to include two office areas, a new media production studio and received 30 new computers and a security system. The cafeteria renovation allowed room

for an additional 400 students. And in February of 2005, a new building opened at Snellville Middle School. The two-story building gave the school an additional 28 classrooms, 2 computer labs, 4 offices, a fitness room and a new gym. The dedication of the building took place on March 31, 2005. Parents, students, staff, and community leaders attended this "Celebration of Learning".

Growth in the Snellville area continued and in 2010 a new middle school— Grace Snell Middle School— opened to relieve Snellville Middle. Both schools serve students in the South Gwinnett Cluster with students from Britt and Norton elementary schools feeding into Snellville Middle.

As part of its work to prepare students for the future, Snellville Middle has hosted a number of academic showcases. Most recently, the school's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Night and Literacy Night showcased students' accomplishments through experiments, robotics, poetry, and debate. The school also exposes students to the world of work through its Career Day community event.

In addition to preparing students academically for high school, Snellville Middle takes pride in its work to develop its students as leaders and contributing citizens. The school hosts a Junior Leadership Corps program that focuses on student leadership and service to others. Cadets complete thousands of hours of community service each year. Students also have the opportunity to give back to the community through participation in other clubs, performances at community and civic events, and through the school's Relay for Life team. These are just a few ways Snellville Middle School is teaching and leading tomorrow's promise.