

FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

History of Current and Future School Names

2/14/24

Elementary Schools

Big Creek Elementary – As the district’s oldest elementary school still in operation, Big Creek Elementary was built in 1939 from the consolidation of three schools: Harris Grove, Oak Grove, and Italy. Mr. A. M. Sosebee was the first principal as well as one of the school's five teachers. The original school building had no electricity. Each room was heated by a coal heater and drinking water came from a well in the school yard. Since its opening, Big Creek has had numerous renovations and additions. The school is named after Big Creek, a stream in Forsyth and Fulton counties, which is a portion of Vickery Creek that was named after the Civil War.

Brandywine Elementary - Forsyth County Schools’ 21st elementary school was named Brandywine, after the former Brandywine School that burned in 1953. The former Brandywine School students later combined with Bethelview School students to form Midway Elementary School in 1961. The name Brandywine honors a Revolutionary War veteran who lived in this area and fought in the 1777 Battle of Brandywine. The new school opened in 2016 with Mr. Todd Smith as principal.

Brookwood Elementary - Brookwood Elementary opened in August 2009, with approximately 800 students from Big Creek, Johns Creek and Sharon elementary schools. Mrs. Kathie Braswell was the school’s first principal. The school was named after the early Brookwood community, whose name reflects the wooded landscape and abundance of small, natural freshwater streams located in Forsyth County.

Chattahoochee Elementary - Chattahoochee Elementary opened in 1993 to 475 students, led by Principal Dr. Cindy Styles-Salloum. The new school opened to accommodate overcrowding at Cumming, Coal Mountain, Sawnee and Chestatee elementary schools. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. The name Chattahoochee originated from a combination of words in the languages of the Choctaw and Creek natives, meaning “Choctaw River” or “Red River,” evolving over the years to the present-day spelling and common usage by English-speaking settlers. The school is named after the former Chattahoochee School and the Chattahoochee River, which was a Native American transportation and trade route.

Chestatee Elementary – Chestatee Elementary is named after the former Chestatee School, which opened in 1931 on five acres in north Forsyth County. The original Chestatee School was built with half of the funds from the Board of Education and half from the Chestatee community. Mr. S. M. Rosser was the first principal of the school. In 1939, Crossroads, Hopewell and Pleasant Grove schools consolidated with Chestatee. The school received a gymnasium and cafeteria soon after that. In 1967, the Chestatee High School was consolidated into the Forsyth County High School, now Forsyth Central High School. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. Originally located near the Chestatee River, which is now a part of Lake Lanier, early Native Americans gave the river this name for “fire-light place” or “place of lights” where they frequently hunted.

Coal Mountain Elementary - Coal Mountain Elementary opened in 1981 to house kindergarten through sixth grade students. This new school replaced the Coal Mountain School that closed in 1955. Both schools are located along Highway 369, the former Old Federal Road, which as an east-west connector was the earliest postal route west of the Chattahoochee. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. Though there are no reported findings of coal reserves in the area, the Coal Mountain location did receive its name from an early resident that claimed the land was rich with coal to encourage more development in the area. This former community was an important postal office and storehouse for travelers on the Federal Road. Mr. Steve Benson served as the new school’s first principal. Since its opening it has received three additions and renovations to its campus.

Cumming Elementary - Cumming Elementary has occupied several locations, beginning with the former Cumming Public School, located at 101 School Street. It next moved to 136 Elm Street, the current Almon C. Hill Educational Center, in 1961 where Mr. Dwight Pulliam served as principal. In 2002 Cumming Elementary moved to its current and permanent location on Dahlonega Street. The school is named after Cumming, the county seat of Forsyth County. The area was first inhabited by the Cherokee Indians in 1755 and in 1830 experienced a gold rush that led to the development of new business.

Daves Creek Elementary – Daves Creek Elementary opened in 1996, but the building was not occupied by students until January 1997. Ms. Marian Hicks was the first principal and the school was built to accommodate the overcrowding at Mashburn and Big Creek elementary schools. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. Daves Creek Elementary is named after the former Daves Creek School, which was named for Dave’s Creek (now James Creek) and the mill owned by David Cordery, who was of Cherokee and English descent and the brother of Charlotte Vickery. The grist mill exists today but is not active. Adjacent to the school campus is Joint Venture Park. The park opened in 2006 and is a partnership between the Forsyth County Board of Education and the Forsyth County Commissioners.

Haw Creek Elementary - The original Haw Creek School was a two-room building heated with coal burning pot-bellied stoves. It was named for the Haw bushes that grew on the banks of the creek. The school contained no lunchroom and no indoor restrooms, and classes were conducted in multi-grade levels. The original school site was deeded to the Board of Education in 1928 and was located across from current-day Walgreen's at the intersection of Trammel Road and Georgia 20. Haw Creek closed in 1955 for the consolidation of schools and later suffered damage from a fire. Haw Creek was the name of a major watershed basin that flows through the site of the original and current school. Dr. Amy Davis, principal, opened the new Haw Creek Elementary in 2009 with 925 students.

Johns Creek Elementary – Johns Creek Elementary opened in 2007 to 860 students from Big Creek and Sharon elementary schools. Ms. Debbie Smith served as the school's first principal. The school was named prior to the incorporation of the city of Johns Creek. It was named after John's Creek, also known as Johnson's Creek after Johnson K. Rogers (who was of Cherokee and English descent), that served as an early 19th century trading post along the Chattahoochee River in what was then Cherokee territory. The area was once a meeting ground between the rival Cherokee and Creek nations.

Kelly Mill Elementary – Kelly Mill Elementary was named after the former mill (Kelly Mill) and because a portion of the school campus faces Kelly Mill Road. The school opened in 2011, lead by principal Mr. Ron McAllister, and was populated with students from Cumming, Sawnee and Vickery Creek elementary schools.

Mashburn Elementary – Mashburn Elementary was named after the late Dr. Marcus Mashburn, Sr., a prominent local physician, senator, and civic leader. The school opened in 1976 to 250 students from Big Creek and Cumming elementary schools. It is built on land donated by Uni City through Billy Martin. Ms. Ruth Hopewell was the school's first principal and was the first full-time female principal in the history of Forsyth County Schools. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Matt Elementary – Matt Elementary opened in 2001 with approximately 600 students. It was named after the original Matt/Mat School, named after the Matt community, which was named after Madison Martin (father of the Postmaster who changed the name of the community from Omega). The original Matt School held 75 students in multiple grades. Rather than desks, students sat on slab benches around an open fireplace. Their drinking water came from a nearby spring and students walked to school. Ms. Mary Harwell was the first principal of the new Matt Elementary.

Midway Elementary – Midway Elementary opened to 310 students in 1961 as a consolidation of both Bethelview and Brandywine schools. Bethelview's four-room building was no longer suitable for use, while Brandywine School was destroyed in a fire. Prior to the opening of Midway, the students from these two schools were bussed to Sharon Elementary. Mr. Hoke S. Spence served as the school's first principal. Since its

opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. The school is named after the community in which it is located, which received its name because it was half-way between Cumming and Alpharetta. A “new”, larger Midway Elementary opened in 2024. The prior site is being leased by the Forsyth County Sheriff’s Office.

New Hope Elementary – When Forsyth County’s school district first formed after the Civil War, 114 of its 1,456 students were Black, according to research by the Historical Society of Cumming/Forsyth County. By the early 1900s, Forsyth County had a stable Black community. The 1910 U.S. Census counted approximately 1,000 Black residents out of around 11,000 overall, and 16 schools served Black students, usually on land donated by African American landowners. New Hope was the name of one of the first and largest schools for African American and Black students in Forsyth County. Over 40 students attended the school on land donated by Thomas Roper, one of the largest Black landowners in Forsyth around 1910. The Board of Education selected this name for the county’s 23 elementary school in 2020. Ms. Laura Webb was the first school principal. The design of the school was a new prototype for the county.

Poole’s Mill Elementary – With land purchased in 2005 on Heardsville Road, this school construction was delayed because of the Great Recession. Opened in August 2020 by Ms. Paige Andrews, Poole’s Mill has the capacity for 1,125 students. It is named after the National Historic Registered Poole’s Mill, which is named for the third owner of the mill, Dr. M.L. Pool (b. 1825 d. 1895). Dr. Pool added a cotton gin to this land site, which also contained a bridge on Settendown Creek. The foundation stones are the only remains of the mill; the covered bridge has been rebuilt and the site is now a park. Later generations added an “e” to the end of the name Pool; therefore the school name matches the spelling of the existing road, park, bridge and historic site.

Sawnee Elementary – Sawnee Elementary opened in 1968 as part of a consolidation of Matt, Ducktown and Friendship schools. Mr. Ray Bennett was the first principal to the 640 students in grades one through eight. It is named after Sawnee Mountain, a five-mile ridge in Forsyth County that was named for a local Cherokee that helped whites adjust to his native land. The Sawnee campus operated divided between a primary and elementary school for many years. In 2001 the original building was demolished, which was replaced with a new building in 2002. The primary and elementary schools were combined into one elementary school in 2007.

Settles Bridge Elementary – Settles Bridge Elementary opened in 1999 to house the overcrowding of 580 students at Daves Creek, Mashburn and Big Creek elementary schools. Ms. Mary Harwell was the school’s first principal. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. The school is named after a historic bridge, Settles Bridge, which was used to cross the Chattahoochee River. The bridge was constructed in 1916 and was one of the state’s longest Pratt-through truss bridges. It was later abandoned.

Sharon Elementary – The first historical record found that mentions the name Sharon School, named for the community in which it is located, is the year 1904. It was a one room wooden building with one teacher for all grades. The 1922-1923 school year was the first year that students attended a new brick Sharon School. The first principal was Mr. L.V. Webb. The new Sharon Elementary opened in 2003 to help alleviate overcrowding at Daves Creek, Big Creek, and Settles Bridge elementary schools. The school opened with 1,105 students and is the first two story elementary school built in Forsyth County. Sharon Elementary was named after the old Sharon School.

Shiloh Point Elementary – Shiloh Point Elementary opened in 2006 with Dr. Jill Potts-Ashworth as its first principal. With 1,100 students, the new school helped alleviate the overcrowding at Big Creek, Vickery Creek and Midway elementary schools. The community was divided on the new school's name. Some preferred Shiloh while others recommended Stoney Point; both are names of roads close to the location of the new school. For the final name a compromise to take a component of each popular name was reached.

Silver City Elementary – Silver City Elementary opened in 2006 with Ms. Beth Kieffer as its first principal. Silver City opened with approximately 790 students from Coal Mountain, Chestatee, and Matt elementary schools. Named after the community in which it is located, Silver City is a former trading post and home to one of the first telephone lines in the county.

Vickery Creek Elementary – Vickery Creek Elementary opened in 1997 with Mr. Mike Rosano as its first principal. The school was built to help alleviate overcrowding at Midway and Cumming elementary schools. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions. It was named after the community and water source, Vickery Creek, in which it is located. The creek was originally called Cedar Creek; however, the name was changed to Vickery's Creek sometime after the arrival of Roswell King and family in 1834.

Whitlow Elementary – Whitlow Elementary opened in 2009 with 1,000 students from Cumming, Shiloh Point and Vickery Creek elementary schools. Dr. Lynne Castleberry was the school's first principal. A portion of the school land was donated by the Whitlow Family. The school is named after the late Mr. George W. Whitlow, who had a retirement home on the parcel of land. Mr. Whitlow served his country in the United States Navy and played for the St. Louis Cardinals. His family made the land donation to serve as a reminder for Mr. Whitlow's love of his land and his love of children.

Secondary Schools

Alliance Academy for Innovation of Cumming-Forsyth County- Opened in August 2018 by Ms. Brandi Cannizzaro, Alliance is the county's 7th high school and only college and career academy. The school has the capacity to serve 1,200 students across the county thru an application process. The words in the school's name represent:

Alliance: To reflect the partnership between the Forsyth County Board of Education, the Cumming City Council, and the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners, as well as the University of North Georgia and Lanier Technical College

Academy: To reflect specialized study in a particular area

for Innovation: To reflect the multi-use of the facility, from schools and government to local businesses and organizations

of Cumming-Forsyth County: To reflect the geographic location

Denmark High- Denmark is the 6th traditional high school in the county. Named after Dr. Leila Denmark, one of the first women pediatricians in Georgia, the school is adjacent to where Dr. Denmark lived and operated her last medical office. Working with Eli Lilly and researchers at Emory University, Dr. Denmark helped develop a successful vaccine for whooping cough in 1932. She retired at the age of 103 as one of the oldest practicing physicians in the nation. She died in 2012 at the age of 114 as the fifth-oldest living person in the world. Denmark HS opened August 2018 with grades 9-11, to relieve overcrowded schools in south and west Forsyth. The first principal was Ms. Heather Gordy. The school building has the capacity to hold 2,500 students and maintains equestrian facilities from the former landowners for veterinary science course offerings.

DeSana Middle – DeSana is named for Jim and Jeanne DeSana. Mr. DeSana was an engineer with General Motors. He was also a self-taught pianist, inventor, and artist. Mrs. DeSana was a genetic scientist who worked for Emory University and later for the State of Georgia. Long-time volunteers in Forsyth County Schools, the DeSanas worked with Forsyth Central HS drama students and Otwell MS school council, and also were involved in the district's first Strategic Plan, Partners in Education Committee and were founding members of the LEADER program. They established their own scholarship program with their lifesavings in 1997, which has provided over \$250,000 in funding to FCS seniors. The school opened August 2016 with Ms. Terri North as principal.

East Forsyth High - East Forsyth HS is Forsyth County's 7th traditional high school. It is on an 89.47-acre tract and is similar in design to Denmark HS. EFHS, as constructed, can accommodate 2,125 students and is designed for a future addition, similar to how Lambert HS and West Forsyth HS were built, to eventually house 2,475 students. The land for EFHS was purchased in 2007 using SPLOST III/2006 Bond funds. The name was selected that same year by the Forsyth County Board of Education after conducting an online community survey; it is the last of the five geographically named high schools (Central, South, North, West and East). Originally projected to open in 2011, after the

Great Recession (2007-09) and subsequent recovery, EFHS construction funding was not secured until the 2017 Bond. Mr. Jeff Cheney was the school's first principal.

Hendrick's Middle – As Forsyth County's 11th middle school, Hendricks located on a 46-acre tract in west Forsyth and is similar in design to DeSana MS. HMS, as constructed, will be the county's largest middle school with the capacity for 1,475 students. Ms. Cheryl Riddle was the school's first principal. The name was selected by the Forsyth County Board of Education to honor former board member Donald F. Hendricks, who served from 1993-2002. Mr. Hendricks led with three guiding principles: a community-based Strategic Plan, Partners in Education, and Local School Advisory Councils (now called Local School Councils). His family selected blue, grey, and white as the school's colors to reflect his career at General Motors and chose the Hawk as the school's mascot to represent his vision, insight, and energy.

Lakeside Middle – Lakeside Middle School opened in 2009 with Ms. Debbie Sarver as the school's first principal. Approximately 730 students from Otwell, Riverwatch and South Forsyth middle schools joined to form this new school. Because of its close proximity to Lake Lanier, the school was named Lakeside. Lake Lanier is a reservoir that is named for poet Sidney Lanier. It was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s and is used for hydroelectricity, flood control, drinking water and recreational purposes. The school received a classroom addition in 2024.

Liberty Middle -Liberty Middle opened in 2002, with Dr. Cindy Styles-Salloum as the school's first principal. It was built to help alleviate student overcrowding at North Forsyth and Otwell middle schools. To recognize the lives lost in the series of four coordinated attacks by al-Qaeda upon the United States on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, the community recommended Liberty as the name of the new school. Liberty is defined as the power and resources to act to fulfill one's own potential.

Little Mill Middle - Little Mill Middle opened in 2007 for 690 students, with Ms. Connie McCrary as its first principal. The school was built to alleviate student overcrowding at North Forsyth Middle School. Little Mill was named after the road on which it is located. The road's name reflects the abundance of waterways located in Forsyth County, and the prior mills located along them that generated economic revenue for early Forsyth County residents.

North Forsyth Middle– Originally created as North Forsyth Junior High that fed into the Forsyth County High, the school first opened its doors to students in 1981 with 382 seventh through ninth graders. The school was located at the current North Forsyth High location and its first principal was Mr. Johnny Otts. The campus was expanded to add a new wing for high school students, allowing the original building to house middle school students. When the population at both schools grew beyond the building capacity, a new middle school building was constructed on adjacent property in 1997. The building was a new construction prototype, which has been replicated across the

county multiple times and also modified into a two-story design. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Otwell Middle– Otwell Middle opened on Elm Street in 1973 as a middle school. The school was named in honor of Mr. Roy P. Otwell, Sr., a local civic leader, businessman, and banker. Mr. Otwell also operated a car garage and built Forsyth County’s first theater. In 1981 a ninth grade was added, changing the school to a junior high that fed into Forsyth County High. However, the school later converted back to a middle school with ninth grade moving to the high school. Due to the student growth at Forsyth Central High School, the original Otwell Middle building was converted to be the West Campus of the high school. The new Otwell Middle School opened in 2001 on Tribble Gap Road. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Piney Grove Middle – Piney Grove Middle opened in 2007 with Ms. Terri North as the school’s first principal. The 750 new students had previously attended South Forsyth and Vickery Creek middle schools, which were both over student capacity. The school was named for the prior Piney Grove School, which dated back to before 1907. It received its name due to the abundance of pine trees in the given area.

Riverwatch Middle – Riverwatch opened in 2004 with Ms. Terri North as the school’s first principal. The 800 new students had previously attended South Forsyth and Otwell middle schools, which were both over student capacity. The school was named Riverwatch for the view of the Chattahoochee River from the high elevation of the campus’ property. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

South Forsyth Middle – Originally built as an addition to the former South Forsyth Junior High, the opening of this new portion of the school allowed the building to be separated into one middle school and one high school to relieve student overcrowding. Mr. Robert Otwell served as the school’s first principal. A new South Forsyth Middle was built in 1998. The building was a new construction prototype, which has been replicated across the county multiple times and also modified into a two-story design. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Vickery Creek Middle – Vickery Creek Middle opened in 1999 and its first principal was Ms. Toni Eubank. The school opened with 700 students from Otwell Middle, which was over student capacity. It was named after the community and water source, Vickery Creek, in which it is located. The creek was originally called Cedar Creek; however, the name was changed to Vickery’s Creek sometime after the arrival of Roswell King and family in 1834. The building was a new construction prototype, which has been replicated across the county multiple times and also modified into a two-story design. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Forsyth Central High— Originally named Forsyth County High, the school opened in 1955 with 429 students. In 1967, Chestatee High School students were moved to this site. Since then, the school has had numerous renovations and additions, including adding the original Otwell Middle school building to the high school's campus. The school's first principal was Mr. Clarence Lambert. With the opening of South Forsyth and North Forsyth high schools, the name of the school was changed to Forsyth Central High. Named after the county in which it is located, Forsyth County was named for John Forsyth, Governor of Georgia from 1827-29 and Secretary of State under Presidents Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren.

Lambert High— Lambert High opened in 2009 with Dr. Gary Davison as the school's first principal. It opened with 1,400 students in grades 9 through 11, with a senior class added the following year. The school was named after the late Mr. Clarence Lambert, a long-time educator and the first principal of Forsyth County High (now known as Forsyth Central High). Mr. Lambert was a veteran of World War II. He served Forsyth County Schools as an associate superintendent and superintendent, and also worked at the Georgia Department of Education. The school design is the same two-story high school prototype as West Forsyth High, which was built for the first time two years prior. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

North Forsyth High— Originally created as North Forsyth Junior High, which fed into the Forsyth County High, the campus was expanded to add a new wing for high school students, thus allowing the original building to house middle school students. When the population at both schools grew beyond the building capacity a new middle school building was constructed on adjacent property, allowing the high school to have its own campus. Additionally, students were moved to North Forsyth High from Forsyth County High, which was over student capacity. The high school's first principal was Mr. Mike Weaver. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

South Forsyth High - Opened as an official high school in 1990, South Forsyth High originally operated as South Forsyth Junior High. The building later received a middle school addition, which allowed the high school to operate separately. A new South Forsyth Middle was built on other property in 1998, which allowed South Forsyth High to have its own campus. Additionally, students were moved to South Forsyth High from Forsyth County High, which was over student capacity. Mr. Mike Weaver was the school's first principal. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

West Forsyth High - West Forsyth High opened in 2007 with Mr. Richard Gill as its first principal. It opened with 1,200 students in grades 9 through 11, with a senior class added the following year. West Forsyth High was the first high school built as a true high school since Forsyth Central High (formerly Forsyth County High) was built in 1955. North and South Forsyth High are converted junior high schools. West Forsyth High was built to alleviate overcrowding at South Forsyth and Forsyth Central high schools. West

Forsyth High was the first construction of the district's two-story high school prototype, which was built two years later at Lambert High. Since its opening, the school has had numerous renovations and additions.

Non-Traditional Programs

Forsyth Academy - In partnership with Lanier Technical College and Communities in Schools of Georgia, Forsyth County Schools opened the Forsyth Academy, a non-traditional charter high school, in 2005 with an enrollment of 60 students. The school is Forsyth County's first charter school and its first principal is Mr. Brad Smith. Originally located on the campus of Lanier Technical College, the school moved to Dahlonega Highway in 2010 as a part of the Academies of Creative Education (A.C.E.). It later changed from a school to a program housed at the Hill Educational Center, thus allowing students to maintain their enrollment at their base-school. A new three-story building on Dahlonega Highway opened in 2021 to house all of ACE's programs.

Forsyth Virtual Academy – Originally named, iAchieve Virtual Academy, the school opened in 2010 as the first 6 through 12 virtual school managed by a school district in Georgia. Open to in and out-of county residents, the school had 200 students attend its inaugural year on either a part or full-time basis. As a part of the Academies of Creative Education (A.C.E.), students did not attend a bricks and mortar school, but instead connected with their teachers and peers virtually to receive a Forsyth County Schools' diploma. In 2016 the name was changed to be reflective of the county and also changed from a school to a program, thus allowing students to maintain their enrollment at their base-school. During COVID, the school district offered K-12 virtual instruction for students based out of their districted schools. In 2022, the K-5 program became a permanent part of the 6-12 Forsyth Virtual Academy.

Gateway Academy- Gateway Academy was established in 1994 as Crossroads, an alternative educational program for Forsyth County Schools' eight through twelfth grade students. It was housed in the social studies wing of Forsyth Central High School and later moved into portable classrooms adjacent to the first Otwell Middle School building, now a part of the Forsyth Central High School campus. In 1997 Crossroads relocated behind the Forsyth County Board of Education and Professional Development Center on Dahlonega Highway, Cumming. In 1998 the program was renamed Piedmont Learning Center to reflect the name of the former Piedmont community in which it was located. In 2010 the program received its third name, Gateway Academy, to reflect its inclusion as an Academy of Creative Education (A.C.E.). At that time the program was relocated to the newly refurbished Almon C. Hill Educational Center, located on Elm Street in Cumming (site of the first Cumming Elementary School). In 2021 the program moved to the first floor of ACE on Dahlonega Highway.