

# History of

## Sweetwater Middle School

Sweetwater Middle School was named for the surrounding Sweetwater community. The building site was used as farmland before the building of the school. Cotton and peppers were grown on the land.

Sweetwater Middle School is located off of Pleasant Hill Road at 3500 Cruse Road, Lawrenceville, Georgia. Growth in the area was the reason for building the school, which opened in the fall of 1976. Enrollment that first year was between 750 and 800 students. The first principal was Jim McGarity, who had been assistant principal at Lawrenceville Middle School. The assistant principal at Sweetwater was Allen Bower, who had been Dyer Elementary School's special education resource teacher.

Students who came to Sweetwater in 1976 were drawn from the following schools: some sixth and seventh graders from Lilburn Middle, all the Bethesda Elementary School fifth graders and about half of the fifth graders at Lilburn Elementary School. Built to house 1,200 students, the original building had 36 classrooms, two multi-purpose rooms, a media center, a physical education facility and a cafeteria.

Sweetwater students are known as the "Saints" a nickname chosen by the first principal. Mr. McGarity also selected the school colors of maroon and gold. Prior to Sweetwater's opening day, Mr. McGarity confidently

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 3500 Cruse Rd.  
Lawrenceville, GA 30045

The following have served as principals of Sweetwater Middle School:

1976–78	Jim McGarity
1978–87	John Ford
1987–2001	Virginia Crowley
2001–2003	Joyce Spraggs
2003–2007	Angela Moton
2007–Present	Georgann Eaton

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

**School Mascot:** Saints

Historian: Betty Williams

stated, "We're really convinced we'll have a fantastic school." The attendance of more than 600 persons at the first PTA meeting indicated the support that the community has continued to show for Sweetwater Middle School.

In 1977, the first orthopedically handicapped program for middle school students in Gwinnett County



was started at Sweetwater Middle School.

After serving as principal for two years, Mr. McGarity was named Director of Middle Schools for Gwinnett County, and John Ford became principal of Sweetwater Middle School. Previously, Mr. Ford had been assistant principal at South Gwinnett High School. Upon being named principal of Sweetwater in 1978, Mr. Ford said, "A lot of unique programs have started at Sweetwater, and I plan to continue all of them" Mrs. Virginia Crowley, who had served as principal of R.D. Head Elementary School, became principal of Sweetwater Middle in 1987, when Mr. Ford left to become principal of the new J. E. Richards Middle School.

In the fall of 1989, Sweetwater Middle School distinguished itself by earning the title of Gwinnett County Middle School of Excellence. The school went on to be named a 1989–90 Georgia School of Excellence. In January 2001, Virginia Crowley retired and the school received a new principal, Ms. Joyce Spraggs. Previously, Ms. Spraggs had served as an assistant principal at Sweetwater Middle School and principal of Beaver Ridge Elementary School. During this time, the school colors were changed to blue, red, and white to coincide with the school colors at Berkmar High School. Sweetwater now had the honor of housing six computer labs; a technology lab and a Media Center stocked with two classroom sets of computers to assist our students with their research needs.

In May of 2003, Ms. Spraggs moved to the Central Office, serving as Director of Elementary School Staffing in Human Resources. Her successor, Mrs. Angela Moton, had vast experience with Gwinnett County schools at Lilburn Middle and Lanier Middle, serving as assistant principal at both schools. The school year began with a school population of 2,560 and a staff consisting of 225 personnel.

Due to Sweetwater's continued growth, a new middle school was built to open in the fall of 2004. Berkmar Middle, which drew almost 700 students from Sweetwater Middle, joins Sweetwater as a feeder school to Berkmar High School.