

In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent

Guest Column By, Stephen Chartier, Galewood Early Elementary Principal, Charlotte Public Schools

Our Roots Start at Galewood Early Elementary School

On October 28, 1951, the Board of Education as well as then Superintendent of Schools, Clark Muma, dedicated three elementary school buildings to the citizens of the City of Charlotte: Southridge, Washington and Galewood. Considered highly modern for the time, all three boasted classrooms outfitted with movable furniture, in-room drinking fountains, sinks, as well as glass-block clerestories which flooded the rooms with ambient light, and aided in air flow and circulation when open. The three buildings cost approximately \$390,000 to construct, and took just over one year to complete.

Galewood Elementary, the largest of the three buildings, originally contained 9 classrooms for students within grades Kindergarten through four, a multi-purpose room, a conference room, a kitchen and the principal’s office. Cleverly designed with expansion in mind, additions appeared in subsequent years particularly as the building was utilized more and more by members of the community, both young and adult alike, as a social hub for clubs, civic meetings and other activities. Galewood was revered and lauded as a true gem within the community and decades later, continues to serve as a reminder of what Charlotte Public Schools encompasses: to provide a culture of academic excellence, opportunity, and success for all through pride, passion and satisfaction in all that we do.

As was the case some sixty-seven years ago, there was a need for Galewood School once again and the reopening of the building as an early elementary school was truly a momentous event for us all. An uptick within our community has led to overcrowding at both Parkview and Washington, resulting in unfavorable conditions within the current portables such as overall safety (they have aged to their lifespan) and wellbeing (lack of running water and bathroom facilities in some), isolation of students and staff members from the general populations of the schools, as well as vast amounts of lost instructional time as students move from one extended area of their campus to another.

Though the footprint remains somewhat the same as it did in 1951, Galewood Early Elementary School is now a blank canvas for visionary thinking that will benefit our youngest of learners. As is the case with the other buildings across the district, the Galewood staff is seizing the opportunity to become one of the finest in delivering exceptional educational experiences to early elementary students and in an environment tailored to their immediate and unique needs—socially, emotionally, behaviorally and academically. This consolidated model comes with a number of other significant benefits ranging from streamlining resources, increasing collaboration, ensuring that staff development and/or training is meaningful and tangible, as well as nurturing a staff that are true experts at their craft, drawing upon a very specific and developmentally appropriate body of knowledge.

The newly derived vision of Galewood is to be the premier early education destination fulfilling our promise that “Roots Start Here.” The Bond of 2018 will not only see our vision to fruition, but positively impact Galewood by expanding the footprint to include five additional and highly student-centered classrooms, establishing safer and more secure entryways, providing much needed ADA accessibility, as well as other site developments such as ergonomic seating, climate control and advancements in technology. Doing so will help not only honor Galewood’s past, but ensure that it remains the true gem that it is.