

HISTORY OF GILBERT LINKOUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gilbert Linkous Elementary School was named for Mr. Gilbert Linkous, a former chairman and long time member of the Montgomery County School Board. Mr. Linkous received two awards for his work in education. In 1962, the Virginia Education Association named him the Outstanding School Board Member in Virginia. Earlier he had received a similar award on the district level from the District M Association, which was comprised of cities and towns in this area. The awards were made on the basis of Mr. Linkous' interest in the building program and his strong support of improvements in teachers' salaries and better education for all students.

Because the new building was still under construction, Gilbert Linkous Elementary opened in the fall of 1963 on the site of the old Blacksburg Elementary School. It moved to its present location on February 17, 1964. The enrollment of the school was over 700 students, according to R. Steve Wheeler, the first principal. There were 22 teachers and one librarian. School colors of red and blue were selected by a popular vote of the students during the spring of 1964.

The Gilbert Linkous Elementary PTA was organized in October of 1964 with Dr. T. J. Marlowe elected as its first president. The PTA has continued to be a highly supportive organization over the years.

The school grew quickly from 1963 to 1972 with many changes and improvements. By the fall of 1967, there were over 850 pupils with 25 teachers. When it opened for the 1968-69 session, over 900 students were enrolled. The faculty had increased to 30. Six mobile units had been added for more classroom space.

In 1969 Gilbert Linkous had 32 classrooms. Four classes were being taught away from the school; two at the old Christian Church on Roanoke Street and two at an old school building on Harding Avenue. These children were transported to and from the school plant for lunches, library periods, assembly programs, and other activities. That same year, because of the crowded conditions, a portable cafeteria serving unit was installed in the hallway near the primary wing. A Resource Materials Center was opened

adjacent to the library in which all audio-visual equipment and materials were stored. The coal heating system was converted to gas.

Mr. M.C. Wiley became Gilbert Linkous' first assistant principal in the summer of 1970. When school started that year, seven classrooms were being rented from Blacksburg Christian Church, which had just been built across the street from the school. In 1971, a resource teacher, Mrs. Doris McElfresh, was hired to assist with direction of the instructional program.

By the fall of 1972, the faculty numbered 45, with over 1,100 students in grades one through seven. The school was fully accredited. Mr. Wheeler left in March of 1973 to take an administrative position in the school system's central office. Mr. Wiley became principal, and Mr. Donald Kelsey was named the assistant principal.

In the fall of 1973, Harding Avenue Elementary School opened and relieved Gilbert Linkous of approximately 450 students. In addition, a new kindergarten building was constructed and opened in 1973-74.

In 1974-75 countywide school reorganization was implemented. Gilbert Linkous and other elementary schools in the county began housing grades K-5, middle schools were made up of grades 6-8, and high schools had grades 9-12. After this reorganization, the enrollment remained at around 500 pupils for the next several years.

Mr. Wheeler, the first principal of the school, returned to serve as principal once again in July of 1984 after serving since 1973 in central office administration positions. He remained at Linkous until his retirement in 1986.

Upon his retirement, Mrs. Doris McElfresh, a former resource teacher for the school, returned to become the school's principal. She left the school in the fall of 1988 to assume the position of Director of Elementary Education for the county school system.

Mr. Ray E. Van Dyke moved to Linkous in the fall of 1988. In that same year, Mrs. Janice Roback, became assistant principal for the school. Mrs. Roback moved to the central office in the fall of 1990, and Mr. Rob

Duckworth became the school's assistant principal.

In 1993, Mr. Van Dyke was appointed as the principal of the new Kipps Elementary School scheduled to open fall 1994. Prior to completion of Kipps Elementary Mr. Van Dyke and Mr. Duckworth served as co-principals of Gilbert Linkous for the 1993-94 school year. When Kipps Elementary opened, Mr. Van Dyke assumed the principalship there full-time and Mr. Duckworth remained at GLE and served as principal until 2001.

Mr. Steve Randolph joined the faculty from 2001 to 2003. He is now a personnel director in Colorado.

Mrs. Carol Kahler came on board in the fall of 2003. We are looking forward to many good years with her.

Currently, the school's enrollment is approximately 370 students with 19 regular classrooms, plus a pre-kindergarten program. The school houses a speech therapist, one full-time music teacher, one full-time physical education teacher, a full-time art teacher, a librarian, one full-time Reading Teacher, part-time English as a Second Language teacher, and three special education teachers. In addition, Gilbert Linkous has five Special Education Assistants.

With excellent facilities and a strong instructional staff, Gilbert Linkous Elementary continues to provide the best educational and instructional program possible.

