



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT...

LaMoyne “Artie” Brunson, III Principal of Fairview Elementary School Graduate of Newton County High School, Class of 1990



They say that the best journey takes you home and for LaMoyne Brunson, III, better known as Artie, that proved to be true. Born and raised in Newton County, Brunson, a 1990 graduate of Newton County High School, left Covington for college and career but when the opportunity arose, he quickly returned home.

Now in his second year as principal of Fairview Elementary School, Brunson’s life has come full circle; he’s now an educator in his hometown school system and many of his grade school and high school teachers are now friends, mentors, and even colleagues.

“One special memory during my career was the opportunity to work with Ms. Gail Bemis at West Newton Elementary and Livingston Elementary,” Brunson recalled. “The friendship is particularly sweet because she was a teacher at East Newton Elementary School during the time I was a student there! To

have a friendship with her as an adult and to be one of her peers and coworkers was a very special blessing!”

That opportunity almost didn’t happen as Brunson admits he was not successful academically during his first collegiate experience at Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, Georgia.

“My levels of effort and commitment to being a college student were poor, and after four quarters I left Emmanuel College,” he explained. “Although the experience was discouraging and embarrassing at the time, I can now reflect on those times as some of the necessary steps in my life, which have positively shaped me into the person that I am today.”

Brunson left Emmanuel College and returned home to Covington and worked for a year before enrolling in DeKalb College in Clarkston.

“Commuting to college while continuing my part-time job during that time were critical in developing my maturity for success in my next attempt at college,” said Brunson. “At DeKalb College, I took core

classes as well as a Foundations of Education course. That course really sparked an interest within me to consider teaching as a career.”

From there, Brunson transferred to Georgia College in Milledgeville, where he completed a few remaining core classes and began courses in the Early Childhood Education program.

“I enjoyed those classes very much, and my success with each one was confirmation that I was beginning to walk in my purpose.”

Brunson eventually graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education and promptly began his career in education at Jackson Primary School in Jackson, Georgia as a second grade teacher. By that time, Brunson knew he had found his passion as he enrolled back into Georgia College and State University to pursue his master’s degree—all while teaching second grade.

When an opening for a second grade teacher became available at West Newton Elementary School in August 2002, Brunson jumped at the chance to return to his hometown. He taught second grade for two years before accepting a position as the school’s literacy coach. It was during that time that his Department of Education supervisor, Ms. Stephanie Hart, began to mentor him and ultimately persuaded him to enroll in a leadership program. While serving as a third grade teacher of an all-boy class at Livingston Elementary School, Brunson completed his education specialist degree from Georgia College & State University.

The very month he completed his degree, Brunson was hired by Principal Miriam Wilkins for his first leadership position, as an assistant principal at Fiquett Elementary School.

“My three years at Fiquett were amazing,” said Brunson. “I learned so much in this new leadership position under the supervision of Ms. Wilkins and later principal, Dr. Naomi Cobb. Dr. Cobb and I diligently worked through the 2010-2011 school year during which time we closed Fiquett Elementary School and developed our plans to open Fairview Elementary School in the fall. Our summer 2011 was exhausting! The expression, ‘blood, sweat, and tears’ was quite true, as we coordinated efforts with our custodians, teachers, and district staff to move into the Fairview campus and prepare everything for our new year ahead in a very short amount of time.”

It was during this time Brunson began thinking about continuing his education. Professional growth wasn’t the only reason he chose to pursue his doctoral degree, however.

“During the summer of 2011, my mother was entering the phase of needing a liver transplant,” he recalled. “I knew that she was continually focused on two things—her declining health and me. I felt that my enrollment and work toward this huge goal of being a doctor would fill her and my dad with such pride, and it also might distract her a little from worrying about her declining health.”

So, with the support of his parents and friends—and trusted mentor, Dr. Cobb, Brunson entered the doctoral program at Liberty University. He ultimately earned his doctorate in educational leadership on April 21, 2015. By the time he graduated, his mother had successfully received her liver transplant and lived to see him accomplish his goal. Not bad for someone who had such an unsuccessful start to his college education. In fact, despite his disappointing first experience with college, Brunson went on to receive Dean’s List status multiple times at Georgia College and State University and ultimately

graduated summa cum laude from Liberty University. He even was elected school level teacher of the year twice during his teaching career.

To top it off, within the year, a new, exciting opportunity would present itself for Brunson, when Dr. Cobb transferred from Fairview to the open principal position at Newton County Theme School. That created a top leadership opening at his school. He applied for and was hired as the new principal of Fairview Elementary School.

“Summer 2016 was exciting, eventful, and certainly quite stressful as I began to think how I could lead the school following Dr. Cobb’s example and how I would form my partnership with my new assistant principal, Dr. Yoli Curry,” said Brunson. “That first year of being principal was so rewarding. Now I am over half-way finished with my second year as principal of Fairview, and I can say with certainty this is the most enjoyable position I’ve ever had and I know without a doubt that I am walking in my purpose.”

In fact, Brunson is so happy to be home and working at a job that he thoroughly enjoys, he sees himself finishing his career in education right where he himself was educated—Newton County School System.

“I’m busy in my second year as principal, and I can easily see myself retiring from this position,” he said. “I enjoy it so much. I have an incredible staff and I am surrounded by competent, amazing leaders within my school. For myself, my professional goal is to thoughtfully and prayerfully make decisions which will allow the children and the staff at Fairview to be safe and successful. For others, my professional goal is to continue mentoring others within my school and within the district to help them reach their goals.”

For Brunson, it’s all about the relationships you build. While he remembers his high school curriculum he says what’s more important are the relationships he forged with his teachers—something that he aspires to do with his students today.

“The high school curriculum during my senior year included many business and computer classes,” he explained. “Two of my most memorable classes were business leadership with Ms. Deborah Robertson and computer programming with Ms. Judy Bice. Although these don’t directly align with my current work, the coursework was part of my foundation for leadership and for my very high level of comfort with using technology during my college experiences. But, although I recognize the curriculum as part of the high school experience, there was something greater that must be acknowledged. The positive relationships I had with Ms. Robertson, Ms. Bice, and others are what I remember when I reflect on my high school experiences. I believe this is still true now almost 30 years later and it will always be true—relationships are and will always be more important than curriculum. If a student believes that the teacher cares about him, anything can be taught. But, even a gifted student could quickly be disengaged if he feels the teacher is distant. This is so important to remember. I don’t remember the programming codes or the business models I learned, but I do remember the way these and other teachers were kind to me and passionate about my learning.”

He added, “I was blessed to have a great educational experience filled with happy memories in the Newton County School System.”

And Brunson makes sure he shares that message with others as he is always recommending Newton County and the local school system to families with children who are considering a move.

“Newton County School System and Newton County have so much to offer,” he explained. “Within Newton County, we have so many wonderful things in our community for families and children, including business and groups for dance, sports, music, arts, Boy and Girl Scouts, and countless churches and civic organizations, parks, and of course, our active and vibrant Downtown Square. Our school system has diversity among our students and staff, which is reflective of the world beyond Covington, Georgia. We have teachers who go the extra mile all the time to provide their best for their students. We have active families within our schools and our communities, and we welcome new families to get involved with their child’s school. The best way to promote success for a child is to have as many people involved in their life as possible.”

With so much love for his community and school system it’s no wonder Brunson would like to raise a child here at home, in Newton County. Single, he’s started the process to become an adoptive parent.

“Currently, I am considering local DFCS agencies as my resource for adoption,” he said. “I am in prayer for God’s will to be clear in my life about this process, and even if I don’t become an adoptive parent I am still abundantly blessed to be surrounded by children in my school and within my family and church, New Life Praise Center.”

And if you’re ever looking for Dr. LaMoyne “Artie” Brunson, III, that’s where you’ll likely find him—at school, with family, or in church. Home is where the heart is and this Newton County High School Class of 1990 graduate is home in Newton County.

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