

Rutherford B. Gaston Sr. Middle School

The 13th of 15 children, Mr. Gaston was born in Georgia. His childhood was spent in Pennsylvania where he attended elementary school and high school. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, ending his service as a second lieutenant. He and his wife, Willodyne, moved to Fresno in the late 1940's where he graduated from Fresno State College in 1953 and began his education career. Rutherford "Bud" Gaston, Sr. was Fresno Unified's first African-American principal. After teaching for 10 years, Mr. Gaston was appointed principal of Teilman and Emerson schools in 1963. He retired in 1986 after serving as principal at Bethune Elementary School for 14 years.

In addition to a 33-year education career, he served the community of Fresno in many capacities, including the Fresno Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Agency, the Fresno Unified Desegregation Task Force and the Board of Directors for the Boys & Girls Club. Mr. Gaston was dedicated to his Christian faith and was a longtime member of Second Baptist Church in Southwest Fresno.

On April 24, 2012, the Fresno Unified School District board voted to name a new southwest middle school after Mr. Gaston. The school opened in August 18, 2014 and was dedicated on September 19, 2014.

Gaston Middle School serves students in grades 7-8, and is the first Fresno Unified School to operate a Health and Wellness Center for the neighborhood community. The new school is a modern two-story building with a large foyer entrance. The 36-classroom wing has large windows and career technology rooms. The large gymnasium includes locker rooms and a snack bar with indoor and outdoor courts and playing fields.

