



Opie Blackwell, Principal

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May 1, 2019

Greetings Ridgeview Community, from Mr. Blackwell:

Though spring break feels distant at this point, I hope you all enjoyed some time with family and friends and came back ready for the final weeks of an incredible school year. In an effort to keep you well informed in the remaining critical weeks, I'm sharing information in this letter about some of those happenings as well as a few highlights from a busy yet exciting spring.

Year-end Events

- May 6th to 10th – Ridgeview Teacher & Staff Appreciation Week
We love our Ridgeview staff! We celebrate them all week long with incredible support from RCMS PTA. Wonder how you can help? We hope to provide a \$20 gift card to each staff member. [Sign-up here](#) with options to donate via Paypal and Venmo, and we'll buy the card!
- May 8th 6:00pm in Ridgeview's Gym – Rising 6th Grade Parent Information Night
- May 11th 6:00pm in Ridgeview's Gym – Spring Cluster Band Concert
- May 13th 7:00pm Peachtree Presbyterian Church – Spring Chorus Concert
- May 14th 6:30pm at Riverwood – Spring Cluster Orchestra Concert
- May 15th – 7th Grade Homeroom Awards
Ridgeview's 7th grade students will do homeroom awards celebrations with their classes.
- May 16th 9:15-10:45 – Lighthouse Schools to Watch Celebration & IB Project Showcase
Join us for our Community Celebration of Ridgeview's prestigious Lighthouse Schools to Watch Designation followed by your student presenting an IB project to you. [RSVP here](#).
- May 16th – 8th Grade iPad Collection
iPads, cases, charging blocks, and cords are all due. We need volunteer support, so [sign up here](#).
- May 17th at 9:15 – 8th Grade Culmination and Awards Ceremony
8th grade families and friends are invited to attend the culmination awards ceremony in our gym.
- May 17th – 6th and 7th Grade iPad Collection
iPads, cases, charging blocks, and cords are all due. We need volunteer support, so [sign up here](#).
- May 18th 7:00-10:00pm – 8th Grade Dance
For RCMS 8th graders only! Volunteers from all grade levels are needed, so [sign up here](#).
- May 20th at 9:00 – Olympics Opening Ceremonies
Ridgeview's time-honored Olympic Games begin. Olympics games continue on May 21, May 22, and May 23. We need volunteers, so please [sign up here!](#)
- May 20th – 6th Grade Homeroom Awards
Ridgeview's 6th grade students will do homeroom awards celebrations with their classes.
- May 20th 11:30-2:30 – 8th Grade Picnic
Volunteers from all grade levels are needed, so [sign up here](#).

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Year-End Testing

On April 15 we began End of Grade (EOG) Milestones testing and End of Course (EOC) milestones testing for students in our high school courses. This year our schedule for testing has been designed to allow students to conduct one section of a test each day. We already notice that this places less stress on students, and that trade-off for a lengthier testing period through the beginning of May is well worth it. Our 6th through 8th graders test in math and ELA, and for 8th grade only there are additional tests in science and social studies. The assessments are designed to measure students' growth and mastery of the standards-based curriculum and scores are considered in some, but not all, promotion/retention decisions such as in the move from 8th grade to 9th grade. Fortunately we experienced very smooth testing thus far, and thank you for ensuring your students attend each day!

These testing times, we know, can be ones of higher anxiety for students (and parents). These tests are simply one measure of each student's progress and are certainly not the be-all, end-all. We know that our students will try their best on the test, and that's all we ask! We appreciate you supporting your student in other important indicators such as by monitoring grades and participation in these last few weeks as they close out classes.

Next Year's Classes for Students

The process for scheduling students into courses for next year is well underway. Thus far, there has been a process of gathering input from teachers as well as from families and students about next year's class schedule, and **one final opportunity will exist later this week**. That process has been:

- January 2019: Scheduling Information Meeting for Parents.
- February 2019: Teachers recommended students to next year courses using guidelines set by the county.
- April 2019: A schedule verification was sent home with students. The schedule verification allows families to review their student's proposed list of core classes (not connections) for errors and accuracy.
- **May 2019 (this week!): A final schedule verification will be sent home with students. Please review it carefully and follow any applicable instructions that will be on the form.**

What kinds of things should you consider when you review your schedule verification?

- That my student has a full listing of core classes (math, science, English, and social studies). Note that connections classes are randomly assigned, but if your child typically participates in a year-long connections and wishes not to, please notify the appropriate teacher now.
- That my student is taking appropriately rigorous courses – where options exist – without overloading him/herself.
- Take into consideration the whole academic course load perspective while also considering extra-curricular responsibilities.

[Click here](#) for the “scheduling timeline” information we presented in January, the middle school course placement guidelines teachers used to make class recommendations, course waiver forms, and the district's math class flowchart.

Please know that the school schedule is built around the courses that students have requested / been recommended for right now, so we ask for your assistance in ensuring at this point that your student's schedule is solidified. **Any and all requests for schedule changes must be made to Mrs. Bulluck before the end of the school year as we will not be able to honor schedule change requests in the fall.**

A Few Spring Experiences

It's important to Ridgeview to provide hands-on learning experiences to deepen the curriculum. This spring 260 or so of us traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, for our bi-annual Music Trip. We saw Charleston history, performed community service cleaning up a marsh, watched a Charleston Pops Concert, and our student musicians performed aboard the U.S.S. Yorktown – the largest group to ever perform there. See highlights on our Facebook Page! 6th and 7th graders visited JA Biztown to learn about businesses and careers, and several groups have gone to places like the Chattahoochee Nature Center, Alliance Theatre, Skills USA Career Convention, and to several college campuses around the state. It is only fitting that we continue to provide important learning opportunities like this. Thank you for being supportive of our students traveling to learn and for your support of PTA which helped many of these trips to occur.

Winter & Spring Highlights

I am most proud of our second-to-none faculty for receiving recognition that they well deserve; in late December Ridgeview was honored with the **Lighthouse Schools to Watch** designation from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. Plainly, this is the highest honor a public middle school can receive and recognizes us for superiority in the areas of Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity, and Organizational Processes and Structures. While you and I have long known the caliber of Ridgeview for our students, I hope you'll be proud to share this news with anyone who may have "skeptically asked" about Ridgeview in the past or who may in the future. To add breadth to our accomplishments, we're honored to now be an **AVID Showcase School**, a model instructional site for preparing students for rigorous high school classes and a college career through our school-wide focus on instructional strategies in Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading in all classes. Our school climate – based on public and internal ratings – remains at the highest of levels and was designated a **5-star climate** for this year. These things drew the attention this year of **State Schools Superintendent Richard Woods** along with **Sandy Springs Mayor Rusty Paul** who paid visits to our school. In other highlights, we hosted a traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony, a true cultural experience; Mr. Bell's students are the proud winners of a model water tower design competition; and our Band, Chorus, and Orchestras continued to earn highest marks this spring in their evaluations – and our Band was the first school performance at City Springs' theatre!

Thanks to your support of our parent organizations, we continue to have robust offerings at Ridgeview. Through the RCMS Foundation and the support of their Casino Night this February, we are able to continue offering extra-curricular musical opportunities and athletics for our students that some schools do not have (click [HERE](#) to learn more). The PTA awarded \$17,000 in classroom innovation grants to support unique instructional projects – and they give needed treats and support to our staff throughout the year (click [HERE](#) to learn more). Our School Governance Council has been charting pathways for Ridgeview to engage more community partners (click [HERE](#) to learn more).

Thank you for taking your valuable time to read this letter and to stay abreast of happenings at Ridgeview. I look forward to an early summer letter reflecting on the year and giving some previews of the fall. For now, I am truly humbled to work with our staff and you to "Make a World of Difference" for our students. Please know that my door is open if you'd like to share your feedback about RCMS with me, or I'm certainly just an e-mail away.

Go Panthers!



Opie Blackwell, Principal