



Opie Blackwell, Principal

Vicki Bulluck, Assistant Principal Dr. Kathleen McCaffrey, Assistant Principal Kenneth Young, Assistant Principal
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Welcome to the Summer of 2019, Ridgeview Community!

We believe that relationships are the foundation to a powerful educational experience. This year we connected to *Wonder*, the school-wide read, and challenged ourselves to remember that “our deeds are our monuments – built with memories instead of stone.” During the 33rd annual Olympic Games, the school came together via country teams to cheer one another on in friendly, spirited competition. In it I saw several deeds that exemplify what I trust and hope your family experienced at several points in this year: I saw students cheering and supporting one another with unabashed passion; I saw teachers stepping in to encourage a student to run the last 25 meters of a mile instead of walking it; I saw students jump at the chance to grab a trash bag and clean up the stands strewn with water cups; I saw parents helping teachers with anything they needed to make the events successful; I saw support staff fanning overheated kiddos and ensuring they were well cared for; I saw smiles and laughter as almost 1,100 students and 130 faculty members enjoyed the community that we’ve all built together. I hope deeds like these from throughout this year stand out – we thoroughly enjoyed an incredible year with your students.

As we begin to settle into summer, I’d like to share some highlights from this year as well as some insight into what promises to be an exciting year ahead at Ridgeview.

Academics:

- Ridgeview’s **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP)** is central to who we are because IB teaches critical thinking skills. Now our whole cluster – elementary to high – is IB! This year we focused on IB Projects each semester in all classes. Almost 300 families joined us on May 16th for our first annual IB Showcase. Students presented one of their IB projects from the year to parents in their homeroom. It was incredible to see students excited to share about their learning. Notably we are proud that our students logged over 5,000 hours of community service – 1,000 more hours than last year. *Next year we will focus more on the hands-on projects we can use to inspire critical thinking and ignite excitement in learning, and we hope more of you can join us for our 2nd IB Showcase. We also go through our re-evaluation visit from IB.*
- Through our ongoing faculty trainings as an **AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination)** school, we’ve developed 5 instructional areas and skills that we believe are essential to collectively focus on: **Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading**. We trained our staff on high-engagement strategies in each of these areas. One example is that all faculty and staff learned “Focused Note-taking” and how to instruct students in this note-taking method very akin to Cornell Notes. Our work as an AVID school has been recognized as an exemplar for the southeast region when Ridgeview was named an **AVID Showcase school** this year, a site where educators can see these high-engagement instructional strategies expertly modeled. *Next year, we will continue to focus on these five areas, broadening strategies that we can use to engage students in developing those crucial skills. And, yes, we’ll have the 3-ring, 3” binder!* To learn more about Ridgeview AVID click [HERE](#).

- Ridgeview continues to be committed to **personalizing learning** by offering instructional methods to meet students' needs. We have been recognized amongst Fulton County Schools for fostering a school-wide climate for personalizing learning using choice in demonstrating learning, using varied strategies to meet students' needs, and using flexible pacing to slow down and speed up according to student readiness. This year we focused on bettering those practices and using small group instruction weekly to target students' acceleration or remediation needs. *Next year we'll continue to improve that small-group instructional model and target using it weekly. We'll also do additional trainings on technology usage – when and when not to use and monitoring of technology use in the classroom.*

Student Support:

- We help Ridgeview students learn social and emotional skills at this important age through our weekly **P.A.W.S. Advisory** class. This year we covered important topics like “Knowing Yourself,” “Understanding Bullies,” “Facing Peer Pressure,” and we conducted a 3-week anti-vaping education series. *Next year we'll focus on additional bullying efforts, organizational habits, and executive skills.*
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)** allows us to analyze student behaviors and design incentives and rewards for meeting expectations as well as clear and graduated disciplinary responses. This year we awarded electronic R.O.A.R points for positive behaviors. We modeled expectations with student-led videos of those behaviors. These efforts, the classroom management strategies of our staff, and our focus on safety led us to a 5-star climate rating. *Next year we work to keep this foundation while building a “Tier 2” program to target a small percentage of student whose behaviors are disruptive to others with a program that provides swift, data-driven interventions.*
- In **COMPASS**, our 25-minute daily focus on building literacy for all students, we shifted focus this year to iReady reading and math software. iReady both accelerates to grade levels ahead or remediates to grade levels behind. Our students worked diligently, and we saw excellent results. *Next year, we'll use iReady software as an additional school-wide tool to inform teachers' personalized learning instruction.*

Athletics / Extra-Curriculars:

- Our **music programs** continue to provide students with stellar instruction to the over 70% of them in a year-long music class. Band, Chorus, and Orchestra all earned superior ratings (the highest) with one exceptional rating in LGPE evaluations – their judging and rating body. The spring musical, a challenging set, was incredible. The band was the first school group to perform in City Springs theatre. And, best of all, over 200 students and many chaperones went on a music-driven trip to Charleston.
- Our **athletic programs** had incredible seasons this year including the highlight that our B-girls Basketball Team under the direction of Coach Suarez won the MAAC championship. Others progressed steadily into final spots. We're proud to offer many more sports opportunities at Ridgeview thanks to the support of our Foundation.
- In **STEM** news, our Engineering in Action students participated in a Water Tower Design competition, and Ridgeview students under the direction of Mr. Bell won part of that design challenge!

Parent Leadership Organizations & Community Support:

Without the unwavering support of parent and community organizations at Ridgeview, we could not offer this level of education and opportunity to our students. I cannot thank these parent leaders and those who supported these organizations enough. Please become involved with our three critical parent organizations!

- The Ridgeview **Parent Teacher Association**, led by Ms. Amanda Hazelrigs and Dr. Theresa Berry, continued their incredible support of RCMS instruction, teachers, and community. The PTA awarded more than \$17,000 in teacher mini-grants for instructional student projects, helped to host and create transition meetings for parents and students new to Ridgeview, led prospective parent tours, hosted student events like the 8th grade dance and rising 6th grade student/parent social, and supported and celebrated staff in style during teacher appreciation week. You can learn more about the PTA's work by clicking [HERE](#). Thank you for supporting their work. In the coming year, we ask that all families are supportive members of our PTA minimally at \$10 per family.
- The **School Governance Council**, chaired by Ms. Michelle Stine, supported Ridgeview's strategic plan with significant attention turned to communication efforts and establishing foundations for strong community partnerships and champions. You will see direct relationships between Ridgeview's future goals and the pillars of the district strategic plan. Through their diligent work, they brought Ridgeview several important opportunities:
 - This year we were fortunate to utilize our four "RFF Professional Development Days" which the council helped to secure to provide tailored professional development to our staff on personalized learning, differentiation, MYP planning/instruction, technology platforms, and PBIS. These days helped us to support our staff improvement in concentrated efforts. Next year we will utilize two RFF days. See the calendar below for next year's dates.
 - Please learn more about the governance council's work and our new strategic plan by clicking [HERE](#).
- The Ridgeview **Foundation** and president Ms. Cathy Lawrence successfully continued a campaign to support music, arts, and athletic offerings (beyond the typical county offerings). This past September's Pantherpalooza was an incredibly successful event, and it provided funding needed to continue supporting extra-curriculars at RCMS. Thank you as well to all who attended the Foundation's Casino Night Fundraiser – not only was it incredibly successful in bolstering what the Foundation can do in years ahead, but also it was a great night of community. You can find out more about their work and how to contribute by clicking [HERE](#). Thank you for supporting their work.
- Ridgeview also enjoyed many benefits from our supportive community partners in implementing programs. Sandy Springs Education Force, the Sandy Springs Mission, the Couchman Foundation, Kona Ice, Taziki's, and the Ritz Carlton Promise Scholars all were instrumental in our work this year, and we thank them!

On the Calendar (a few initial fall dates – for complete details, see the calendar on our website):

- Our **6th Grade Panther Peek** is August 8, 2019, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
 - We host a special orientation program for students and parents alike that starts promptly at 12:00.
 - Student schedules, parent organization memberships, spirit wear/uniforms, gym uniforms, and other information will be available.
- Our **7th and 8th Grade Panther Peek** is August 8, 2019, from 2:00-3:30 (drop in during this window).
 - Student schedules, parent organization memberships, spirit wear/uniforms, gym uniforms, and other information will be available.
- We will have specific **back-to-school information available for all grades on our website by July 22nd, and be on the lookout for our Back to School mailing to arrive in mailboxes that week.**

- **The first day of School** is Monday, August 12th, 2019. Students are not permitted to be dropped off until 8:15 a.m. (no drop offs at the front doors!), and carpool ends promptly at 8:45 a.m.
- Next year we will have **two Ridgeview (and cluster school) Release days** in addition to those non-student-contact days provided on the district calendar (click [HERE](#) for the district calendar).
 - Those two Ridgeview student release days are: October 10 and March 16.
- Our **RCMS Open House & Curriculum Night** is Thursday, September 5th. It begins with our Annual Title 1 meeting at 5:00; the open house/curriculum night program runs from 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- **Pantherpalooza** will be held on Friday, September 20th.

Thank You:

I certainly recognize that you have choices about your child's education, and I appreciate the trust you place in us for this important responsibility. Together, we have created a very special educational opportunity at Ridgeview, and I know that working together we will continue to see incredible strides.

If a family member or friend is considering Ridgeview now or in the future, I hope you'll share with them the perspective of Miriam Zetina-Hernandez, our REACH scholarship winner from 2016, in this video below and will send any prospective family my way for an introduction.

[Ridgeview Middle School: A Student Perspective \(clickable\)](#)

I hope you each have a great summer and that our students find ways to make a world of difference this summer! I look forward to seeing everyone back for a great school year.

Go Panthers!

Sincerely,



Opie Blackwell, Proud Principal