



Opie Blackwell, Principal

Vicki Bulluck, Assistant Principal Dr. Kathleen McCaffrey, Assistant Principal Kenneth Young, Assistant Principal
Sonyja Minor, Data Coach Dr. LaShonda Mills, Graduation Coach Amanda Stafford, Assistant Administrator Dr. Andrea VonBiberstein, IB Coordinator

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Greetings Ridgeview Community:

As we near the Winter Holiday, each year I enjoy writing a letter to our families and community recounting some of our proud work from the fall. This winter my letter is decidedly exciting. I indeed have some incredible news to share:

Ridgeview has been named and honored with one of the most prestigious national middle school awards; I am proud to announce that we just earned the National Forum's elite "Lighthouse Schools to Watch" title. We are a "Lighthouse School!"

"Lighthouse Schools," as they are abbreviated, are beacons for their strategic focus on school improvement and are models of middle school academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes. They assume the role of model and mentor by hosting visitors and attending various professional developments to fulfill this responsibility. Specifically, Lighthouse Schools are committed to their own continuous improvement and must be evaluated each three years to retain designation.

Amongst many positives our Lighthouse committee wrote in our report, *"One of the most impressive aspects of the school is the collaborative work that has and continues to be done to blend numerous best practices into the culture of this richly diverse school. The level of commitment of the administration and staff and their willingness to continuously adapt practice to provide a program that is uniquely suited to Ridgeview based on best practices in the middle level is impressive. The whole child is at the center of all that happens at the school, and students feel safe and know that they have advocates who care for them emotionally and socially as well as academically."*

This recognition is a reflection of Ridgeview's best staff, it is a reflection of your support of our work, and it is something to talk about.

We have additional exciting fall news. We also are honored to have been named in late November an official, certified AVID "Showcase School." Being named a "Showcase School" means we are a model site who opens our doors to show and train colleagues how to implement best instructional AVID practices – practices that are best in preparing students for high school and college challenge with the skills and tools to meet those demands. We couldn't be prouder to have earned the title of AVID "Showcase School."

You likely saw in October that for the second year we have earned a 5-star CCRPI climate rating, the highest we can earn, and that we saw greater success in our overall CCRPI report card score. All of this is credit to our staff's focused work guided by our [2018-2022 strategic plan](#). In the Student Achievement pillar, International Baccalaureate instruction which inspires the application of knowledge in inquiry-driven work is at the forefront as is a focus on literacy. To reach the rigors of IB, we're focused on utilizing high-engagement Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (what we call W.I.C.O.R.) teaching strategies in all classes – strategies we've learned from [AVID](#) – and on personalizing learning to make instruction match students' needs. Our now [state-recognized PBIS program](#) guides our People and Culture strand to sustain positive student behavior, and in the Community Collaboration pillar we're focused on fostering better and increased community and parent engagement. In fact on January 24th we're hosting a STEM-focused family night at 5:30.

This fall our vital parent organizations have sustained innovation and opportunity. Our [PTA](#) awarded over \$17,000 in teacher mini-grants for classroom innovations. Our [Foundation](#) is currently at \$58,000 of its \$70,000 goal to continue bolstering our renowned music programs (and, wow – the 70% of our students who performed recently were incredible) as well as our additional athletic opportunities, and our [SGC](#) is my partner in our strategic direction. If you can support our organizations monetarily or with time, please do so – we depend upon you!

Thank you for taking time to read Panther Tales each Friday evening. Google Classroom summaries along with Home Access Center are the cornerstone of what we hope is a regular routine of check-ins at home on current progress so that we can act as a team for your child.

Our winter holiday begins on Thursday, Dec. 20th at 4:05 with no after school activities. Thank you for ensuring that pick-ups are on time.

As I reflect on the fall, I am thankful and privileged to work at the best middle school – a "Lighthouse School" – and am appreciative of you entrusting us to work with your incredible students! As always, if you need something, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teachers, to my administrative team, or to me. Happy Holidays to you and yours, and see you on January 7th.

Sincerely,

Opie Blackwell, Principal