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News Release

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Ridgeview Charter School named Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch

Ridgeview Charter School, a middle school in Sandy Springs, was recently named a Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. Ridgeview joins an elite group of two dozen middle schools across the state being recognized as exemplar middle schools for excellence.

The National Forum is an alliance of educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations committed to promoting academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents. Established in 1999, the Schools to Watch (STW) program identifies schools nationwide that focus on improvement efforts characterized by a continuous trajectory toward success.

To be considered for this designation, schools must complete a lengthy application and undergo a rigorous evaluation process. Once a school meets the criteria, the evaluating committee visits the school for several days of observations and interviews with administration, teachers, parents and even business partners. The committee convenes to evaluate gathered materials from all parties as well as volumes of data and prepares reports and recommendations to the lead evaluator.

In December, Ridgeview Principal Opie Blackwell made a special announcement to his staff before students arrived for the day, complete with a student band percussionist drumroll and a free breakfast. “This is one of the highest state honors a middle school can earn,” he proudly shared.

Assistant Principal Dr. Kathleen McCaffrey said, “This STW designation is an important part of Ridgeview Charter Middle School's history - past, present, and future. All previous and current teachers, administrators, staff, and community members have contributed to this achievement.”

In the spring, Ridgeview leaders will travel to Washington D.C. to officially be presented with their new designation. Additionally, they will meet leaders from other Lighthouse schools across the country to share best practices. In the meantime, their status as a Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch lends them the credibility to share their successes and lessons with other schools interested in pursuing the program or similar goals.

Last fall Ridgeview earned another impressive title of becoming an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Showcase school. The year-long program is a voluntary academic elective course that aims to close the achievement gap for students in the “academic middle.”. These are students earning mostly B and C grades who

have the desire to go to college and who are often from under-resourced families and communities. Ridgeview AVID elective students are typically first-generation college students who learn study skills, goal setting, public speaking, time management, organization under supervision of the AVID Coordinator. The first Ridgeview AVID cohort are now in 11th grade at Riverwood International Charter School, the feeder high school.

Photos are attached.

(Photo Caption #1): *Ridgeview teachers and administrators celebrate the Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch announcement.*

(Photo Caption #2): *Interim Superintendent Dr. Cindy Loe joins RCS Principal Opie Blackwell, Assistant Principal Kenneth Young, Assistant Principal Dr. Kathleen McCaffrey, Assistant Principal Vickie Bulluck and Board Vice President Julia Bernath at the January 8, 2019 Board meeting.*

(Photo Caption #3): *Ridgeview AVID students as well as faculty and administration panel participants gather to present the program in November 2018. First row: AVID students Josefina Hernandez and Tai Freeman. Second Row: AVID students Zori Tarrance, Ian Somoza, Landon Avila, Paulina Perez, Ashley Raymundo, Lindsay Trani, Joseph Jimenez and Omar Estrada. Third row: Ridgeview teachers Kaela Largent, Emily Toler, Jai Cruz, Kathryn Lewis, Adrian Harris, AVID Coordinator Caroline Boddiford and Principal Opie Blackwell.*

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About the Fulton County School System. The Fulton County School System is the fourth largest school system in Georgia. More than 95,000 students attend 106 schools in the cities of Alpharetta, Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Johns Creek, Milton, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, Sandy Springs, South Fulton and Union City.