



Ridgeland Honors Academy  
Established 2009

Dear Applicant and Parents:

We are thrilled you are interested in being a part of the Ridgeland Honors Academy for the 2021-2022 school year. As you consider the options for your high school career, we would like to help you make an informed decision by providing you with some information about the Ridgeland Honors Academy and its goals.

After many successful years in operation, we believe that we have made great strides in providing the best educational opportunities available for the college-bound students of northwest Georgia. The Honors Academy was established because educators at Ridgeland knew that when compared with other students across the country, our students were just as intelligent, just as motivated, and just as deserving of admission into the nation's most prestigious colleges. Our goal was to highlight these students' abilities, encourage them to challenge themselves even more academically, and build their self-confidence.

This school-within-a-school concept was developed to offer our talented, gifted, and highly-motivated students the challenges and opportunities needed to make them competitive in the crucial, and often harsh, arena of college admissions. Prior to the Honors Academy, graduates had often been accepted into good, even the best, Southern colleges and universities only to return home because they were unable to handle the demands of academics, time-management, and social stresses that college required of them. Approximately 70% of Georgia high school graduates lose the Hope Scholarship during their time in college due to their inability to maintain the required grade point average. Our goal is to make sure that your student is not only admitted into the college of his or her choice, but is able to succeed at the academic challenges and graduate from college with the desired degree.

**Advantages of an Honors Academy Education:**

- The highest-level courses are offered only in the Honors Academy. This includes all honors and Advanced Placement (college-level) courses
- ACT scores for Honors Academy students have risen from an average of 21 in the first year to an average of 26.0 last year, with many students scoring in the 30s.
- Prior to the creation of the Honors Academy, six Advanced Placement (AP) courses were offered at Ridgeland. Currently we offer 15 AP classes and four dual enrollment mathematics courses. Honors Academy students will graduate with a minimum of eight AP classes and three dual enrollment math courses on their transcripts. Ninety-eight percent of first-year students admitted to UGA pursued an honors or advanced level curricular track.
- Since the creation of the Ridgeland Honors Academy, the pass rate on AP exams has risen from 40% to 77.0%, while the number of students taking AP exams has almost tripled and continues to climb yearly.
- In the past ten years, Ridgeland Honors Academy students have been accepted into such prestigious U.S. colleges and universities as:

Harvard University-MA	Washington & Lee College-VA	Auburn University-AL
Vanderbilt University-TN	Northwestern University-IL	University of Alabama-AL
Yale University-CT	University of the South-TN	University of Arizona-AZ
Tulane University-LA	University of Tennessee-TN	University of Miami-FL
Dartmouth College-NH	University of Mississippi-MS	University of Michigan-MI

- In the past nine years, Ridgeland Honors Academy students have been accepted into such prestigious Georgia colleges and universities as:

University of Georgia-Honors Program	Mercer University
Georgia Institute of Technology	Emory University
Agnes Scott College	Oglethorpe University

- Honors Academy students earned over \$4.2 million in college scholarships last year alone and this year's senior students have already exceeded \$1.5 million in college scholarships with many more awards to come.

### Common Areas of Concern:

- Students and parents may have concerns that the student's grade point average (GPA) will not be as high if the student is in the Honors Academy taking advanced courses, when the student could take regular courses and have an extremely high GPA. This may well be true; however, generally colleges and universities would prefer to see a "C" in an Advanced Placement (AP) course than an "A" in a regular course.
  - According to the University of Georgia Undergraduate Admissions website, *"...a student with a 4.0 GPA in a superior curriculum of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses might be admitted with an SAT score at or below 1000. Yet, another students with a 3.0 GPA and an SAT score of 1400 might not be admitted, if the students opts for no more than a standard college prep curriculum with few if any Honors, AP or IB classes...To be most competitive, you should challenge yourself by pursuing the most rigorous courses available in your high school...."*
- What if I am interested in a science, engineering, or mathematics degree?
  - Most universities that specialize in science, engineering, or mathematics recommend that a student take the most rigorous academic courses offered by his/her high school. All honors and Advanced Placement courses available at Ridgeland High School are only offered in the Honors Academy. In addition, science courses such as physics and mathematics courses such as calculus are currently available only to Honors Academy students. Year after year our students are granted admission to the most prestigious science, engineering, and mathematics universities in the nation including Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, Harvard, and Yale.
- Honors Academy students are isolated from other students at Ridgeland.
  - Ridgeland administrators and the Honors Academy teachers have taken great care that our students are not isolated from other students. Honors Academy students have five 55-minute classes in the Honors Academy. After that, they have lunch, clubs, and fourth block electives with non-Honors Academy students. In fact, the largest and most popular elective classes (Band, Chorus, ROTC, Art, etc.) are offered fourth block so that Honors Academy students may participate in them.
- My student is not strong in math (writing, science, etc.). Why can't he just take high-level classes in the areas in which he excels?
  - The Honors Academy realizes that most of our students do not excel in every core subject; however, colleges and universities require a solid educational foundation from every student they admit, regardless of the subject area. A student's weak subject area may be the very one in which the student needs extra practice and aid.
  - In order to provide individual support for each and every student, Honors Academy grade-level teachers meet weekly to:
    1. Devise curriculum plans to address the needs of each student. Sometimes this means individual lesson plans to support struggling students, and sometimes it involves enrichment plans for advanced students.
    2. Discuss student grades and class rigor. The intention of each teacher in the Honors Academy is that every class is rigorous, but none are overwhelming.
    3. Provide both support and independence for students: We want to support students, but also want them to take responsibility for their education as they progress through high school. Again, we are attempting to support them and still prepare them for the rigors of college.

As you consider application into the Ridgeland Honors Academy, we want you to know that your student is our top priority. If you have any questions or concerns, we would very much like to discuss them with you. We want each student to succeed, not only in the Ridgeland Honors Academy but also in his college, career, and life.

Sincerely,  
Ridgeland High School Honors Academy  
ryanbandy@walkerschools.org