

History of

Peachtree Ridge High School

Built on 66 forested acres, Peachtree Ridge High School (PRHS) lies along a series of rolling hills known as Peachtree Ridge. This natural barrier once separated the Cherokee Indians, who lived along the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries, and the Lower Creek Indians, who inhabited the southern portions of Gwinnett County amidst the Yellow, Brushy Fork, Alcovy, and Apalachee river valleys.

The section of the county in which PRHS is located was long ago known simply as Bethel. Lebanon Church also once stood nearby. The school is situated several miles southwest of Suwanee Old Town, once inhabited by Cherokee but believed to have been established by Shawnee Indians. It is believed that Native Americans lived in this area hundreds of years prior to the town's establishment. The name "Suwanee" is said to be the Anglo version of Shawnee.

PRHS is located near the old and historical Peachtree Road, which was built during the War of 1812, less than a half dozen years before the Cherokee tribe ceded land in the area to the federal government. The road connected Fort Standing Peachtree at the Chattahoochee to Fort Daniel at an important junction leading to the old Hog Mountain settlement. The road continued east and south, connecting with the Hightower Trail used by settlers, soldiers, and pack trains.

FAST FACTS

Address: 1555 Old Peachtree Road
Suwanee, GA 30024

The following have been principals of Peachtree Ridge High School:

2003–06	Dr. James Kahrs
2006–2008	Dr. Steven Flynt
2008–Nov. 2013	Dr. Kevin Tashlein
Dec. 2013–Present	Dr. Jeff Matthews

School Colors: Royal, White, and Red as accent color

School Mascot: Lions

A few hundred yards east of the school stands the 180-year-old Goodwin family home. Built in 1823, it is reputed to be the oldest house in Suwanee. The house and property were acquired and held by the Gilbert family for most of the past 150 years before changing hands.

PRHS is constructed on land sold by the heirs of Eugene B. Baynes. Beginning in 1948, Mr. Baynes acquired hundreds of acres of land in the area through dozens of purchases of both large and small tracts. Behind the school property lies Lake Louella and on the west side of the



property runs the unpaved Lake Louella Road, both of which were named after Mrs. Louise Ella Baynes.

Construction of the 416,000 square-foot PRHS main facility commenced in March 2001. The school opened its doors for classes on Monday, August 11, 2003, with enrollment topping 1,900 students. By November of the same year, another 19,570 square feet of athletic facilities were completed. In response to continued growth in the area, the school district built a three-story classroom addition at the school that opened in 2016.

As Principal Jim Kahrs and the inaugural staff of PRHS began their work of creating a school community, they did so by implementing a block schedule. The school continues on a block schedule today.

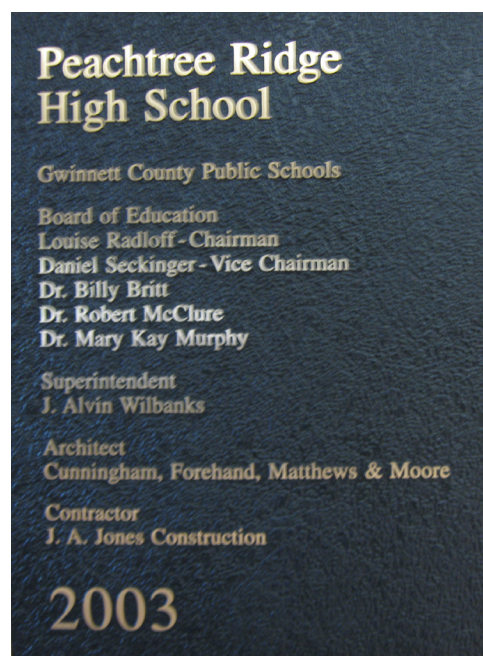
Peachtree Ridge High was named a Georgia School of Excellence in 2009. It earned the title for making the greatest continuous gains in student achievement for the past three years in reading and mathematics.

Principal Kevin Tashlein recognized the efforts of the school's community. "As a relatively young school, this recognition is tangible evidence that we are making progress toward our vision of preparing students for success in a dynamic global environment," he said. In all, 27 schools throughout the state earned the title for either making the greatest gains in student achievement or being in the top 10 percent of Georgia schools as measured by assessments in reading and mathematics. Typically, one school from each congressional district is honored in each category, but in some districts, two schools tied for the honor. In this year, PRHS shared this honor with Osborne Middle School.

Tashlein also said a factor in the school's success was an improvement plan embraced by the community. He attributed much of the school's students' academic successes to a schoolwide focus on engaging bell-to-bell instruction, helping all teachers and leaders plan for improved student learning, and developing effective safety nets for all Peachtree Ridge High School students.

In 2010, the school was in the national spotlight as the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) chose Peachtree Ridge High School as the site for a national news conference to release a set of state-led education standards, the Common Core State Standards.

Peachtree Ridge High School continued to earn national acclaim as it received top honors for the school's efforts to make Advanced Placement (AP) classes inclusive and inciting excitement around AP coursework. In 2016, the Georgia Department of Education in a partnership with



The College Board announced that the Suwanee high school won the inaugural AP Champion Award, which recognizes efforts toward removing barriers of access to AP, ensuring AP classes reflect the diversity of the school's population, illustrating creative approaches to building and sustaining a positive culture around AP coursework. Peachtree Ridge was one of only five schools in the state to receive the honor.

As part of its focus on academics, Peachtree Ridge High School implemented a STEM Program that continues to grow each year as it engages students. The expanded STEM program, known as SPIRE (STEM Program for Innovation Rigor Excellence), creates STEM access for all students. Through innovative, integrated, project-based, and technology-enhanced instruction, students master content standards through an engineering lens. In December of 2016, State Schools Superintendent Richard Woods awarded Peachtree Ridge High School's SPIRE program Georgia STEM Certification in a ceremony at the school. The signature SPIRE program at Peachtree Ridge combines English Language Arts as the cornerstone of an impressive STEM package that allows students to pursue projects of their personal interest. Engineering and physics are taught as co-curricular subjects and students move seamlessly through rigorous coursework that prepares them for a STEM career.

PRHS serves a community rich in history and high expectations. Tremendous teachers, exceptional students, and a supportive community work together to ensure students are prepared for the future.. The contributions of Peachtree Ridge students and staff— today and into the future— will add another chapter of successes, leaving an indelible mark on this learning community.