Louise Radloff Middle School opened its doors for the first time on August 9, 2004, with more than 1,000 middle school students in grades 6, 7, and 8. A beautiful facility located near Interstate 85 in Duluth, it sits on 35 acres, and opened with over 177,000 square feet of space to support teaching and learning. The building, which now houses our school, was originally financed by the New York Times and served as the headquarters for the Gwinnett Daily News. Upon securing the property to relieve overcrowding in the Meadowcreek Cluster schools, the Gwinnett County Board of Education voted unanimously to name the school after one of Georgia’s longest-serving board members: Louise Radloff of District V.

Mrs. Radloff’s commitment to Gwinnett’s children began with her own family and her involvement in local school PTA activities and leadership. From PTA President, Louise Radloff became the first Republican elected to public office in Gwinnett. She has been a mainstay on Gwinnett’s Board for more than 40 years, serving eight times as Board chairman.

Her service to education has not been limited to GCPS. In fact, Mrs. Radloff has exhibited leadership at the state and national levels as well. She is a former district director and past president of the Georgia School Boards Association, as well as a member of the organization’s Federal Relations Network. Her hard work and advocacy for public schools earned Mrs. Radloff a place in the Georgia School Boards Association's Education Hall of Fame.

Louise Radloff has served on a wide array of boards, councils, committees, and coalitions, including the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Gwinnett County Board of Health, Gwinnett/Rockdale/
Newton Community Service Board, Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services, the United Way, the Gwinnett Children’s Shelter, and the Chamber of Commerce. In 2006, commemorating her devotion to matters of public health, the Louise Radloff Health Administrative Complex was dedicated in honor of her years of service. Especially dear to her heart is her continued involvement in the ministries of St. James Lutheran Church.

Mrs. Radloff has been honored with the county’s most distinguished awards. She was named Citizen of the Year by the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, became the first person outside the development community chosen for the Council for Quality Growth’s Button Gwinnett Award, and received the prestigious United Way Women’s Legacy Award.

The title Mrs. Radloff wears day in and day out, however, is the “biggest fan and supporter” of Louise Radloff Middle School. As a surrogate grandmother to our school’s many students, and a role model and mentor for the many educators within the building, Mrs. Radloff is a frequent presence at the school’s many activities, ceremonies, and events. Because Mrs. Radloff is a “lighthouse” public servant, her school continues to aspire to be a “Lighthouse School” by committing itself to attracting, hiring, retaining, and nurturing the best and brightest in the teaching profession; expecting all students to learn and perform at high levels; and adding value to its school community.

When the school opened its doors in 2004, Dr. Patty Heitmuller, a long-standing leader in Gwinnett County Public Schools, was selected to serve as the Charter Principal and aptly dubbed the “Keeper of the Light.” Dr. Heitmuller is a true “Lighthouse Leader,” having previously been selected as the Charter Principal for Harbins Elementary and serving as one of the visionaries and founders of Gwinnett County’s nationally-known Teachers as Leaders teacher development program. Dr. Heitmuller’s time at Radloff saw the founding of many key aspects of the school’s efforts, including a commitment to the arts, initial efforts at expanding technology and student leadership offerings, opportunities for social and physical well-being such as the annual Field Day celebration and Walk-n-Talks, and a focus on intense mathematics instruction. Under Dr. Heitmuller’s leadership, Radloff’s “light” welcomed students of all abilities, becoming a model of RTI (Response-to-Intervention) processes and opportunities for needed academic interventions to ensure students’ continued academic and growth.

During Dr. Heitmuller’s tenure, the school experienced tremendous growth, moving from its initial count of 1,000 students to more than 1,600. To meet the needs of these students, the summer of 2009, saw the addition of 30 classrooms, and an additional gymnasium was added in 2010. The gym was named the Richard Radloff Gymnasium in honor of Mrs. Radloff’s devoted husband, who was himself equally-committed to the efforts of public education. At present, the building occupies almost 260,000 square feet of space. Under Dr. Heitmuller’s leadership, the entire community learned the truth behind her mantra that every day is “a great day to be a Raider!”

Upon Dr. Heitmuller’s retirement from GCPS leadership in 2011, Al Taylor was named the school’s principal. Mr. Taylor had previously served the district as the Assistant Principal for Curriculum at Meadowcreek High School, the cluster’s high school. Under Mr. Taylor’s leadership, the school moved into a new era of focus, with a greater emphasis on rigor and relevance. Rather than focusing on building an identity and understanding what it means to be a “Lighthouse School,” Mr. Taylor’s leadership saw initiatives based on enacting the work of the “Lighthouse,” becoming an organization that builds students who are “Leading and Lighting the Way.” This new school motto, along with the adoption of an official School Crest (emblazoned with the GCPS torch, representing truth and knowledge; the Mighty Mustang, a symbol of our cluster high school and a figure of strength and vitality; the open scroll, a symbol of learning and education; and a circle of figures, signifying a commitment to community and service; all flanked by two lighthouses, with beams pointed upward and shining their light upon the helmet of a raider, symbolizing the individual commitment of each student to fight for their place of prominence, equipped to conquer each future endeavor; and all in the school colors of navy, Carolina blue, and silver, symbolic of the unlimited possibilities of sky and sea, when combined with truth, loyalty, fidelity, and strength), provided strong visuals for the students, faculty, and community to embrace and embody.

Louise Radloff began serving on the Gwinnett County Board of Education in January of 1973.
Mr. Taylor’s leadership efforts also saw the formation of an elected Faculty Senate, a teacher/educator-leadership and advisory group that works to help keep the school’s organization moving forward as well as providing a forum for input from all factions. A final significant advancement of Radloff’s efforts under Mr. Taylor’s leadership was the formation of the Gear Up for Graduation Academy. This intervention-oriented, school-within-a-school program is generously funded by the Gwinnett County Board of Education, and provides overage 8th graders an opportunity to work in a smaller learning community and have the possibility of completing 8th and 9th grade curricula simultaneously within a single year. This provides them the opportunity to matriculate from 8th grade to 10th grade and graduate high school within three years, putting them in the same class with their like-age peers. Again, Mr. Taylor, as a "Keeper of the Light," used his leadership to help the light of hope burn brighter for the Academy students, and helped all students and the school move closer to fulfilling the vision of being a true “Lighthouse School.”

In November 2013, Mr. Taylor was selected to move to Berkmar High School to serve as principal there, and Dr. Sarah Skinner, curriculum assistant principal at Meadowcreek High School, was named Radloff’s third principal, assuming leadership of a school that continued to grow in number to more than 1,850 students. In the spring of 2014, Dr. Skinner served as the master of ceremonies for a 10-year-celebration of Radloff that included keynotes by Mr. J. Alvin Wilbanks, CEO/Superintendent of Gwinnett County Public School; Mrs. Louise Radloff, GCPS Board of Education District V Representative and school namesake; Charter Principal Dr. Patty Heitmuller; and former principal Mr. Al Taylor. The event was attended by numerous educators from across Gwinnett County, all of the principals from across the Meadowcreek cluster, and the entire faculty of Radloff Middle School. More than 30 charter faculty members were recognized at the event, which was catered by the Creek Caterers (Culinary Arts students at Meadowcreek High School, many of whom were former Radloff Raiders), and entertainment was provided by the Radloff Faculty Ensemble. The event also saw the performance premier of the school’s alma mater, composed by Charter Assistance Principal Christopher Corbitt and performed by the Radloff Middle School Student Chorale.

Dr. Skinner’s tenure was a time of more change for the school and community as a redistricting in the spring of 2015, due to ever-increasing student enrollments, created a shift in the pattern of feeder neighborhoods and schools. Now three schools (Ferguson Elementary, Meadowcreek Elementary, and Graves Elementary) serve as the feeder schools for Radloff going forward. For the first time since the school’s inception, school year 2015–16 brought a lowered student enrollment, with a projection of slightly more than 1,400 students. As a slightly smaller school, the school embraces the opportunity to further the efforts of increased STEM education opportunities, continue the efforts within the Gear Up for Graduation Academy, expand students’ exposure to and readiness for high school career-based academies as well as the world of work, and commit to a greater focus on college and career readiness. Together, students and faculty alike work each day to be “Respectful, Responsible, and Ready” for each opportunity that comes our way. Radloff is a place where we expand students’ dreams and provide the tools and skills to make them reality.

In March of 2018, Chekquita M. Johnson, an assistant principal at nearby Sweetwater Middle School, was named as the school’s principal.

At Radloff Middle School, our school’s number one belief is we serve the smartest kids in Gwinnett County, and ones with unlimited potential. Our job is to daily “mine for the gold” that lies within each of our students, and help equip them with the knowledge and skills essential for success in the 21st century. Truly, Louise Radloff’s legacy will live on in the place of learning that bears her name. With this incredible woman’s passion, determination, and commitment inspiring our school’s foundation—paired with educators who work collaboratively to stoke the “light” that burns within each of our students—Louise Radloff Middle is certain to continue being a school that is “Leading and Lighting the way!”