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SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MANATEE COUNTY

October 27, 2017

Commissioner Pam Stewart
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Chancellor Hershel Lyons
Division of Public Schools
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1502
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dr. Julio Valle, Jr.
Bureau of School Improvement
325 West Gaines Street, Room 314
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Request one-year extension for the turnaround process for Rogers Garden-Bullock Elementary and Sugg Middle School

Dear Commissioner Stewart, Chancellor Lyons, and Dr. Valle:

The School District of Manatee County is respectfully requesting a one-year extension for the turnaround process for Rogers Gardens Bullock Elementary School and Sugg Middle School. The reason for this request is outlined as follows:

The principal of G D Rogers Garden-Bullock (RGB) has been in place since July 1, 2016. The 2017-2018 will be her second year as principal. RGB was established on July 1, 2016. The principal has a proven background for implementing successful changes and improving student achievement. She moved her previous school Samoset Elementary School from an F to a C in two years. Currently Samoset Elementary is still a "C" graded school.

Prior to the 2016-17 school year, RGB was Orange Ridge Bullock. The Orange Ridge Bullock site was sold in 2017 and a majority of students were moved to RGB (370 out of 600); the remaining 230 students were sent to 17 different elementary schools in the district. RGB opened at the previous site of G D Rogers Garden, which was closed as of June 30, 2016. A majority of the students who previously attended G D Rogers Garden are now attending RGB (114 out of 278). RGB is a combination of Orange Ridge Bullock and G D Rogers Garden and is implementing its second full year as a school; however, it maintained the Orange Ridge Bullock MSID. In addition, the District implemented the Opportunity Scholarship for students to move to higher rated schools. This impact to the new G D Rogers Garden was significant. The school grade of "D" was really an "F" due to high number of level one and level two students attending RGB Elementary.

RGB received a School Improvement Grant Cohort 4 (SIG4) grant award for 2017-18. As part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG4) initiative, the district was tasked with contracting with an outside source to provide school improvement support for the identified schools. Research on high poverty, high performing schools (Parrett & Budge, 2012), indicates successful schools incorporate three strategies:

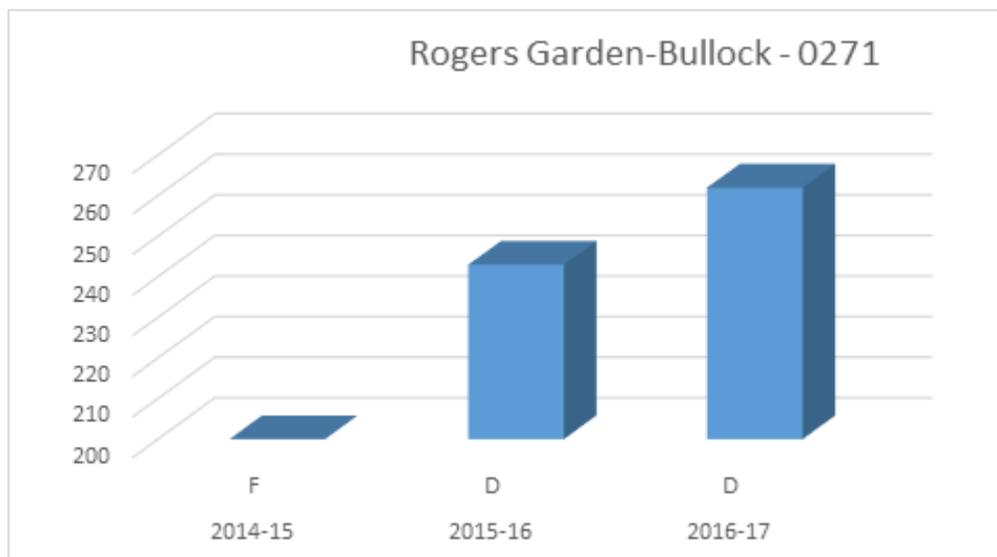
- Developing a common instructional framework
- Teaching every student to read proficiently
- Providing additional quality instructional time.

The SIG4 Grant focuses on these three strategies. The Learning-Focused materials support developing a common instructional framework. The professional development provided by them uses their materials and provides professional development and coaching support to implement the program with fidelity. Learning-Focused provided research indicating their program and materials have been used in other high-poverty, low-performing schools resulting in improved student achievement. After reviewing the research and reviewing past performance by the company, we chose to use this resource to support RGB.

RGB teachers and paraprofessionals attended three days of professional development on lesson planning and increasing rigor prior to the opening of the school in August 2017. They receive monthly support from Learning-Focused staff as well as weekly support from district staff in an effort to improve instruction and raise student achievement.

RGB is in Year 1 of implementation of the SIG4 initiatives. This is a five year grant that builds on the professional development and support in year one to sustain improvement and increase student achievement. Significant changes in instruction, staffing, and support included in the grant are at the beginning stages of implementation.

A review of longitudinal data for G D Rogers Garden-Bullock (RGB) for the past three school years suggests that RGB made consistent progress from 2015 to 2017. The current 2017 school grade is a “D” (37.4 percent). This is an increase from 34.7 percent in 2016 and 27.6 percent in 2015.



Based on our first quarter benchmarks, we are seeing continued improvement of proficiency, and our data is indicating strong evidence of growth. Our belief is that the following factors are contributing to this improvement:

- Implementation of the Learning Focus initiative
- Strong Support from the State Differentiated Accountability team under the direction of Dr. Julio Valle
- Strong Support from District School Improvement Team
- Targeted support by the Superintendent for the School Administration Team

All of these efforts will be maintained if we are granted an extension of one year. As Superintendent, I attended all reviews conducted by the Regional Executive Director (RED) and support the school administration with biweekly visits, weekly reviews of planning, data and conversation with principal. There is no doubt in my mind RGB is on the right path to improving its school grade to at least a “C” by the end of this school year.

The principal of Sugg Middle School has been in place since July 1, 2016. The 2017-2018 will be her second year as principal. Principal McDonald has shown evidence of success as former principal who moved Daughtrey Elementary from an “F” to a “C” graded school. Ms. McDonald has changed administrative and instructional staff to ensure the most effective individuals are working at Sugg Middle School.

Sugg received a School Improvement Grant Cohort 4 (SIG4) grant award for 2017-18. As part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG4) initiative, the district was tasked with contracting with an outside source to provide school improvement support for the identified schools. Research on high poverty, high performing schools (Parrett & Budge, 2012), indicates successful schools incorporate three strategies:

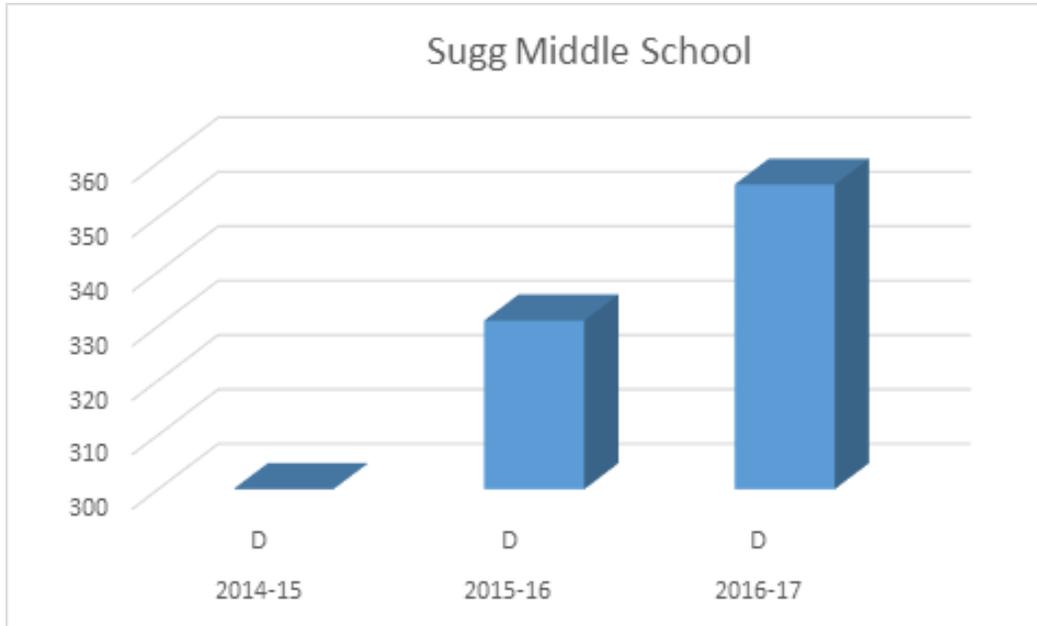
- Developing a common instructional framework
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The SIG4 Grant focuses on these three strategies. The Learning-Focused materials support developing a common instructional framework. The professional development provided by them uses their materials and provides professional development and coaching support to implement the program with fidelity. Learning-Focused provided research indicating their program and materials have been used in other high-poverty, low-performing schools resulting in improved student achievement. After reviewing the research and reviewing past performance by the company, we chose to use this resource to support Sugg.

Sugg teachers and paraprofessionals attended three days of professional development on lesson planning and increasing rigor prior to the opening of the school in August 2017. They receive monthly support from Learning-Focused staff as well as weekly support from district staff in an effort to improve instruction and raise student achievement.

Sugg is in Year One of implementation of the SIG4 initiatives. This is a five year grant that builds on the professional development and support in year one to sustain improvement and increase student achievement. Significant changes in instruction, staffing, and support included in the grant are at the beginning stages of implementation.

A review of longitudinal data for Sugg for the past three school years suggests that Sugg made consistent progress from 2015 to 2017. The current 2017 school grade is a “D” (39.5 percent). This is an increase from 36.7 percent in 2016 and 36.6 percent in 2015. Sugg Middle was one percentage point from a “C.”



Based on our first quarter benchmarks, we are seeing continued improvement of proficiency, and our data is indicating strong evidence of growth. Our belief is that the following factors are contributing to this improvement:

- Implementation of the Learning Focus initiative
- Strong Support of the State Differentiated Accountability Team under the direction of Dr. Julio Valle
- Strong Support from District School Improvement Team
- Targeted support by the Deputy Superintendent for the School Administration Team

All of these efforts will be maintained if we are granted an extension of one year. The Deputy Superintendent has attended all Sugg Middle School reviews conducted by the Regional Executive Director (RED) and supports the school administration with biweekly visits, weekly reviews of planning, data and conversation with principal. There is no doubt in my mind Sugg Middle is on the right path to improving its school grade to at least a “C” by the end of this school year.

We strongly urge you to consider our request. The data and strategies that are in place are strong evidence that these two schools have made dramatic changes and improvements to support a one-year extension.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Greene', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Diana Greene
Superintendent