



SCHOOL BOARD OF POLK COUNTY

P.O. BOX 391
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BARTOW, FLORIDA 33830

February 8, 2018

Dear students, parents, staff and community members,

The Ledger published an article today under the headline, "Private Sector to Take Over 6 Polk Public Schools." Those schools include Bartow Middle, Garner Elementary, Griffin Elementary, Kathleen Middle, Lake Alfred Polytech Academy, and Lake Marion Creek Middle.

I want to assure you that no firm decisions have been made about the future of the schools. **What *The Ledger* reported was a contingency plan that will only go into effect if the schools do not achieve a grade of C or better after the 2017-18 school year.**

Here is where we stand:

- Each of the schools listed above have had grades of D or F for three successive years. The state mandated that Polk County Public Schools develop a contingency plan if the schools cannot improve to a grade of C or better during the 2017-18 school year. **The 2017-18 school grades will be released in June 2018.**
- The state gave Polk County Public Schools three contingency plan options, including closing the schools and transferring students to a higher performing schools; closing the schools and reopening them as charter schools; hiring an external operator(s) to manage the schools and achieve gains in the schools' grades.
- Polk County Public Schools chose the external operator option because it would cause the least disruption to the schools and their surrounding communities, and would allow the district the greatest amount of flexibility.
- Polk County Public Schools has interviewed three external operator companies. A selection has not yet been made. I will make my recommendation to the School Board at the Feb. 13 work session. **The external operator option is a contingency plan if the schools do not achieve a grade of C or better.**
- The school district has provided numerous forms of support to the schools to help them achieve the needed improvement in their school grades. **We are optimistic that the school grades will improve to a C or better.** If that happens, the district will continue to provide resources to help the schools maintain their upward trajectory.
- The school district regularly holds Community Assessment Team meetings to discuss the status of the low-performing schools. Meeting dates and times are listed at polk-fl.net and at the bottom of this letter. You may also contact your school principal about meetings.

Polk County Public Schools remains committed to improving our turnaround schools, and fully expects to see gains when school grades are announced over the summer. We welcome your involvement and support. Working together, we can move these schools. Should you have concerns or questions, please contact your school principal.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline M. Byrd
Superintendent

*Polk County Schools -
an equal opportunity
institution for education
and employment*

The Mission of Polk County Public Schools is to provide a high quality education for all students.

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Schedule of Upcoming Community Assessment Team Meetings

Community Assessment Teams are scheduled to meet in the coming weeks.

Community Assessment Teams, comprised of parents, educators, local government and business representatives, and community activists, review performance data in schools earning a grade of F or three consecutive grades of D.

Community Assessment Teams conduct meetings to discuss and explore viable ways to support our schools and meet the needs of our students. The meetings are open to the public to attend.

Here is a list of the upcoming meetings, their dates, times and locations:

Date	Time & Location	School
Tuesday, Feb. 20	6 p.m.	Bartow Middle
	Mulberry High	Gibbons Street Elementary
	1 Panther Place, Mulberry, 33860	Mulberry High
Tuesday, Feb. 20	6 p.m.	Kathleen High
	Kathleen High	Kathleen Middle
	1100 Red Devil Way Lakeland, 33815	Griffin Elementary
Thursday, Feb. 22	6 p.m.	Auburndale Central Elementary
	Winter Haven High	Caldwell Elementary
	600 6th St SE Winter Haven, 33880	Garner Elementary
		Lake Alfred Polytech Academy
		Lake Marion Creek Middle
		McLaughlin Middle
		Stambaugh Middle