



# SCHOOL BOARD OF POLK COUNTY

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## Board Members

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JACQUELINE M. BYRD  
Superintendent

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](http://polk-fl.net). 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.*