

# Dr. Diana GREENE

Superintendent  
of Manatee  
County Schools



Dr. Greene is at Manatee High School with some students. They are: Seated l-r: Keriann Lindberg and Simon Auguste. Standing l-r: Erik Romero, Alison Eker and Anthony Cocci.

**S**he's been at the helm of the Manatee School Board as Superintendent for a year now. In that time, the initiatives Diana spearheaded increased the letter grade of 24 schools by at least one grade and seven schools by two grades. She was a key player in converting the school district's \$8 million deficit to a \$14 million surplus. And she developed a plan to decrease the number of African American males in Exceptional Student Education (special education) and to increase the number in gifted programs.

After all the turmoil of the past few years (of which she was well aware), one may wonder why she applied for the position. "I have something to offer to the school district. I have the skill set, knowledge, and senior executive leadership experience. My son had leukemia when he was very young. After three years of his chemotherapy and hospital stays, I feel there is nothing in life that I cannot handle. I want to be a positive force for the district."



Assuming the leadership role of an organization following a tumultuous period of time is a position to which many would not aspire. The contentious relationship between the Manatee County School Board and the previous Superintendent ultimately resulted in the Superintendent's premature departure. After announcing a national search for a new Superintendent, the Board did an abrupt about-face and hired the Interim Superintendent Dr. Diana Greene in June 2015. Less than a year later, the Board praised her for the harmonious working relationship between the Board and her.

Diana was an elementary school principal and former Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Marion County when she applied for the Manatee County Superintendent position in 2013. Even though the Board hired someone else, the new Superintendent asked Diana to come on board as the Deputy Superintendent of Instructional Services. According to the school district, the initiatives Diana spearheaded increased the letter grade of 24 schools by at least one grade and seven schools by two grades. She was a key player in converting the school district's \$8 million deficit to a \$14 million surplus in one year. She developed a plan to decrease the number of African American males in Exceptional Student Education (special education) and to increase the number in gifted programs.

After the turmoil between the former Superintendent and the Board of which Diana was well aware, one has to question her reason for applying for the position. She says, "I have something to offer to the school district. I have the skill set, knowledge, and senior executive leadership experience. My son had leukemia when he was very young. After three years of his chemotherapy and hospital stays, I feel there is nothing in life that I cannot handle. I want to be a positive force for the district. I have a solid relationship with the Board with its two-way communication which is one of my strengths. I cannot accomplish anything without communicating with people at all levels. The Board and I agreed on several operating tenets. We agreed to be respectful of each other's views, listen to each other's views, and work together. There are times that the Board accepts my recommendations, compromises, or asks me to bring something back with modifications." Diana's first year focused on five Cs—all in response to the public perception of past years. Her five Cs are calmness, civility, confidence, consistency, and community engagement. She says there has been good progress on all five.

Philip A. Brown, III, President, United Way of Manatee County, says, "Our community and school district are so fortunate to count Dr. Greene as one of our leaders and truly as one of our community's greatest assets. As an educator she possesses, puts to use, and has truly integrated all four of the necessary dimensions of what it means to be a professional: knowledge, theory, practice, and values essential to being a professional educator and administrator. In addition she demonstrates competence, compassion, curiosity, and courage. Combining both professionalism and leadership with her abilities to build trust, to focus on the 'big stuff,' to have a vision, to always behave with an eye on the long term while

at the same time focusing on the immediate issues, and to do so with humility, persistence, and grace, always knowing this is not about her but about others, makes Dr. Greene truly one of the most valued members of our community."

Manatee County had been a C school district, but became a B school district this year. Diana's long-term goals are for the district to become an A district, to implement a master facility plan, and to have the district on a solid financial foundation with its \$610 million budget. Diana recently announced a plan to close some schools and merge some schools that were underutilized and/or had severe physical limitations. Phase I calls for the closing of Orange Ridge Bullock Elementary School and merging with Gardens Elementary School during the summer. Phase II which will take place after the upcoming school year will see the closing of Wakeland Elementary and its merge with Johnson Elementary and the closing of Oneco and Tillman Elementary Schools. Phase III is the construction of a new high school in 2018 in northeast Manatee County near Parrish or Ellenton which is dependent on passing the reinstatement of the one-half cent sales tax referendum.

When asked about her responsibilities and daily activities, she explains, "I spend time insuring that the 6,100 employees feel supported and that the 48,000 students receive a quality education. I monitor projects, visit schools, attend school advisory committee meetings, meet with parents, and reply to the hundreds of emails I receive every day. When students say hello to me in the grocery store, I know that something has impacted their lives. When a parent comes up to talk to me—that's what excites me. I feel I can actually make a difference. I work with a phenomenal caring team at the district office and at the schools. I attended at least one home football game at every high school and the County Fair. I hope people realize that I am just one of them."

Diana relies on her Christian faith and advises people to do what you can and allow God to do the rest. She describes herself as determined, driven, friendly, and smart. She has made inroads in the community because she says she listens; she cannot always solve a problem, but she gives reasons for a yes or no answer.

Raised in a military family, Diana lived all over the United States and in Germany. She graduated from high school in Marion County and earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from the University of North Florida, a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University, and a doctorate in K-12 Teaching and Learning from Capella University. After his military service, her father was an auto mechanics teacher and her mother was a school principal during segregation. She also has two brothers and one sister. Diana's husband, James Greene, is a financial advisor and their son Aldon attends online Rasmussen College and son Joshua attends High Point University. When not working, Diana enjoys tennis, movies, golf, and travel.

Several times Diana mentions the saying "seek first to understand, then to be understood." She demonstrates this daily as she deliberates decisions that affect students, staff, and the community. 📞

📖 STORY: Carol Darling

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