

First Coast Tiger Bay Tracks



May 2021 The First Coast Tiger Bay Club, Inc. P.O. Box 2608, Jacksonville, FL 32203

Dr. Diana Greene: Superintendent of Schools May 20, 2022



The **First Coast Tiger Bay Club** guest speaker for the May meeting is **Dr. Diana L. Greene**, Superintendent of Duval County Public Schools (DCPS). This is the 20th largest school district in the nation and serves 130,000 students with 200 schools and a \$1.7 billion dollar budget. Beginning her tenure as Superintendent in July of

2018, Dr. Greene faced many complex issues. Most problematic was adjustment to new realities posed by the COVID lockdown and how the District would survive it. In addition, she pushed for a half-cent sale tax referendum during the 2020 general election to help fund school district capital needs such as maintenance and repair on some of the oldest school buildings in Florida.

Dr. Greene was named the 2021 Florida Superintendent of the Year by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) and only the second African American woman to receive this honor. Prior to her work in Duval, she was the Superintendent of the School District of Manatee County, where she made significant strides academically, financially and in terms of its public perception. Known for her positive nature and engaging personality, Dr. Greene initiated her time as Superintendent in Manatee County by putting forward a leadership plan involving the Five C's: Calmness, Consistency, Civility, Confidence and Community. Dr. Greene oversaw significant District academic improvements as the graduation rate continued to increase. On the financial front, the Manatee District's fund balance (reserve fund) increased from \$17.3 million to more than \$25.5 million in the last three years and led to a two-time increase in its international credit Fitch Rating. Those accomplishments led directly to the passage of

two separate countywide tax referenda in a span of 16 months. The first came in 2016 as Manatee County voters approved renewal of a 15-year half-cent sales tax to help fund school district capital needs. The second was in 2018 as voters approved a four-year, one-mill property tax increase to help fund more competitive teacher and staff pay, and to add a half-hour of instruction for students each day. Combined, these two referenda are expected to add more than \$60 million annually to the Manatee County District's budget.

During her 33-year career as an educator Dr. Greene was a teacher, assistant principal and principal as well as working in curriculum development, staff development and senior executive leadership. Her father served in the Air Force, and she grew up living all over the United States and abroad. She is married to James Greene, a Navy veteran, and an independent financial advisor; they have two sons: Aldon and Joshua.

Dr. Greene has quite a full plate. We will hear how the school system navigated the COVID lockdown as well as the impact of the half-cent sales tax approved in the last election in Jacksonville. Since that *sales tax* increase was only for an upgrade of the physical facilities, Jacksonville voters will also be asked to approve a one-mill *property tax* increase during the August (primary) election. That one-mill increase would raise property taxes by one dollar for every thousand dollars of valuation and yield an estimated \$81.8 million of additional revenues per year. These new monies would be allocated with 65% going for teacher pay enhancements, 10% for staff, 12.5% for art and athletics programs and 12.5% earmarked as additional funds for charter schools.

Continued next page

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FIRST COAST TIGER BAY CLUB meets for lunch every month, except June, July and December, on the 3rd Friday at 11:30 at The River Club, 1 Independent Drive, 35th Floor. Cost for the event, which includes the wonderful buffet and parking, is \$28.

Reservations are required: E-Mail: fctigerbay@gmail.com

Continued from Page 1

Financial issues are not the only controversies Dr. Greene must face. She will also have to navigate through the quagmire of a toxic political environment. During election years politicians frequently pander to their base voters and show little regard for the consequences of those policies. The 2022 election year resulted in a slew of state legislation that will challenge the public school administrations. The Parental Rights in Education (more commonly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” law) specifies “*classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards.*” In other words, teachers may not reference sexual orientation or gender identity at all in grades K through 3, and any mention of it must be “age appropriate” in grades 4-12. As always, the “devil is in the detail.” The law’s proponents call this commonsense legislation, but the opponents say its ambigu-

ous description will inevitably lead to numerous lawsuits against teachers and school boards initiated by parents hoping for financial bonanzas. Similarly, the legislation prohibiting discussion of “Critical Race Theory,” another ambiguous concept, will create a “chilling effect” in the classroom as teachers fear they will be sued. What impact will this have on the quality of class discussions? No one disputes the appropriate role of legislative oversight in these areas. However, the public is not well served when laws are hastily crafted more with an eye to pandering to “culture war” tropes than to effective public policy. Court challenges to both laws have already been filed and this leave teachers and school administrators largely in uncharted territory and in fear of being sued.

Dr. Greene will have to address these issues diplomatically so as not to offend powerful interests—we hope you can join us in welcoming her to the **First Coast Tiger Bay Club** forum on **May 20th**.

Coming Attractions

June - No Meeting

July - No meeting

August 19 - Committee working on program

The First Coast Tiger Bay Club is a multi-partisan political forum that promotes free and open debate but does not support any candidates or issues.

*Dr. Stephen Baker, Newsletter Editor
Henry Cordes, Publisher*

**Reservations are REQUIRED. Please RSVP by
Monday May 16, 2022
E-mail: fctigerbay@gmail.com .**

The First Coast Tiger Bay Club is a multi-partisan political and civic forum designed to explore crucial issues of the day by interacting with outstanding speakers in an open format. The club is non-partisan, never supports particular candidates, nor take sides on issues.