

EXHIBIT B

DECLARATION OF DEMETRA BAXTER-SMITH

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

I, Demetra Baxter-Smith, declare under penalty of perjury that the following statements are true:

1. I am the principal of Booth-Fickett K-8 Magnet School and have held this position since the summer of 2018. I have personal knowledge of the facts stated herein.

2. Before the start of the 2018-19 school year, there was an exodus of 12 teachers from Booth-Fickett at winter break December 2017. The exodus of so many teachers at once, and subsequent turnover in administration, created a unique crisis: by the start of school, Booth-Fickett had more than 20 vacancies (including 14 for certified staff) and enrollment had dropped by more than 200 students.

3. During the first quarter of the 2018-19 school year, teacher and student morale was low, teacher absentee rates were high, and the school faced severe student behavior and disciplinary issues.

4. Toward the end of the first quarter and by the second quarter, The District provided a high level of central support, including working with my staff to improve culture and climate and to build cohesion among my teachers and teaching staff provided by the District's central office.

5. By the third quarter, student behavior and culture and climate began to improve. We spent a significant amount of time working with students and teachers to understand the newly revised Student Code of Conduct. Through the support of the District and our Restorative and Positive Practices Facilitator, we increased use of restorative circles and strengthened our PBIS system.

6. In November 2018, the Special Master recommended we develop an academic improvement plan. By January 2019, we had developed the plan, reduced certified staff vacancies from 14 to 9, strengthened MTSS practices, filled our vacant Assistant Principal position, and reduced student behavior and disciplinary issues.

1 7. Team Fickett, a collaboration of central and site personnel, emerged during
2 the third quarter. We then shifted focus to developing an academic and culture and climate
3 improvement plan, including a staff commitment letter and planned professional learning
4 through the spring and summer to strengthen classroom instruction and classroom
5 management.

6 8. By the time of AzMERIT testing in March, the school had begun to
7 experience a turn-around, but the newly-implemented structural changes could not have
8 made, and did not make, a significant impact on the AzMERIT scores for 2018-19, which
9 generally remained stagnant. Based on my experience, and knowledge of school reform
10 research, school reform may take up to five years and rarely bears fruit within a single year.

11 9. Over the summer, our staff (including new hires for the 2019-20 school
12 years) engaged in intense professional learning to continue to build and strengthen our core
13 teaching team.

14 10. By the fall of 2019, we had reduced our vacancies to one. We instituted a
15 no-cell phone, clear backpack policy to build on our momentum building stronger culture
16 and climate and reducing behavior and disciplinary issues. Again, we spent significant
17 time with students and teachers understanding the Code of Conduct and increasing student
18 accountability to lay the foundation for better classroom management that leads to student
19 attention, engagement, and more effective learning. We spent a lot of focus on
20 strengthening professional learning communities (PLCs), training on writing lesson plans,
21 instructional delivery, data monitoring systems, and using data for formative assessments.
22 We also instituted increased walk-throughs, observations, and coaching to improve
23 classroom instruction through job-embedded professional learning.

24 11. As a result of our efforts between January and August 2019, our benchmark
25 scores improved in ELA and Math for all three benchmark exams in SY2019-20. Based
26 on these benchmark scores, and the structures and changes we have put into place, I am
27 confident that we would have seen marked improvement in proficiency scores had our
28 students been given the opportunity to take the 2019-20 AzMERIT exam.

1 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America
2 that the foregoing is true and correct.

3 DATED this 17th day of June, 2020.

4
5 
6 Declarant

7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28