

# PROJECT Graduation

A partnership of Riverview Gardens  
School District and The Little Bit Foundation

## PROMISE FULFILLED

In the spring of 2017, The Little Bit Foundation made a pledge to the Riverview Gardens School District (RGSD). By 2019, we would be serving all 5,550 students in the district. With our adoption of Riverview Gardens High School this fall – our 13th RGSD school – we will fulfill that promise. “So many corporations, foundations, individuals, Little Bit volunteers and others have gotten behind our **Project Graduation** initiative; it’s truly inspiring to see the level of commitment to the people of North County,” says Rosemary Hanley, Little Bit CEO and Co-Founder.

“Events in Ferguson opened a lot of eyes to the challenges of our North County neighbors,” says Hanley. “Our promise was not only to come, but to stay.” Selecting RGSD was not a difficult decision, she adds. The median income of Riverview Gardens is almost 20% lower than neighboring Ferguson, yet the district receives the fewest support services of any in North County. By providing a continuum of support from preschool through high school, the aim of Project Graduation is to keep students in school and on track for graduation. For students in the high school, the objective has expanded to helping them figure out what’s next.

Serving at the high school level requires a new approach and set of expectations, says Little Bit High School Manager John Pimmel. “It’s about meeting students where they are and walking *with* them,” he says.



An experienced educator with a Master’s in Secondary Education and Teaching, Pimmel understands the need and desire of this cohort of students to be independent and involved in decisions about their lives. He was brought on staff in November to lead high school programming and has been working alongside Project Graduation Coordinator Michael Morgan to adapt the Little Bit model to the unique needs of adolescents living in poverty, and to foster partnerships that will bring the program to life. The pair has been meeting regularly with a student advisory board from the high school, who’s helped guide much of the design. **CONTINUED**

Students in Riverview Gardens High will receive Little Bit core programming to meet basic needs, but in a manner encouraging self-advocacy and autonomy (e.g. food pantries, clothing closets, hygiene products available in restrooms), along with the following program offerings:

**SOAR** (Seek. Own. Advocate. Rise.): Beginning freshman year, students will have the opportunity to meet with a trained Little Bit mentor on a biweekly basis, who will serve as listener, advisor and accountability partner for as long as needed.

**What's Next:** Through career fairs and exploration, internships, skills development activities and help with course selection, we will assist students in planning for their next steps after graduation.

**Imagine Together:** Students will learn the importance of their own civic responsibility and working together to effect the change they wish to see, by planning and participating in service learning activities with Little Bit support.

The intent is to lay the groundwork for much of the high school programming beginning in middle school, and to begin to enrich and empower early on, says Hanley. "For students that stay in the district, they will have Little Bit's support every step of the way. That's a promise they can count on."



**SOAR**  
SEEK. OWN. ADVOCATE. RISE



**WHAT'S  
NEXT**



**IMAGINE  
TOGETHER**

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## Be a mentor, champion a future

To fulfill our SOAR program beginning this fall, we are actively recruiting volunteers to serve as academic mentors.

- Help students improve social skills
- Provide accountability and celebrate successes
- Assist with career discovery and setting goals
- Be a source of networking opportunities
- Be a support through day-to-day struggles

Contact John Pimmel to discuss your interest. Email [john.pimmel@thelittlebitfoundation.org](mailto:john.pimmel@thelittlebitfoundation.org) or call 314.330.4619.



Breaking down barriers to learning