

The Gecko Gazette

Robert E. Willis Elementary School

14705 The Masters Avenue, Lakewood Ranch, Florida 34202 (941) 316-8245



PRINCIPAL

It is hard to believe we are already preparing for our first Report Card conferences of this school year! Report Card conference night has been scheduled for **Thursday, October 24th from 4:30pm to 7:30pm**. This is an important time for you to meet with your child's teacher to learn more about his/her progress. Conference times are short, usually 10 -15 minutes, so you may want to do a little homework of your own prior to your conference. To make the most of your conference time you may want to consider the following:

Before the conference. Write down questions that you may have for the teacher and any information about your child that you would want to convey to the teacher such as special talents, hobbies, favorite subjects and areas of challenge that you may notice from observing homework.

Talk to your child. Find out what he thinks are his best subjects and what subjects he likes the least. Ask why. Also, ask your student if there is anything he would like you to talk about with his teacher. Make sure your child doesn't worry about the meeting. Help him understand that you and his teacher are meeting to help him.

During the conference. Be on time. Conference time is short. If you feel you need additional time schedule an additional conference

with the teacher to discuss additional items.

Ask Important Questions. You are encouraged to have candid conversations with your child's teacher. We share a common goal and that is your child's success at school. Good questions to ask may include:

- (1) What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- (2) How does my child get along with classmates?
- (3) Is my child working to his/her ability? Where could there be improvement?
- (4) What can we do at home to support what you are doing in the classroom?

Listen to the teacher as you would the doctor. We all have the same goal but may have different perspectives on your child as a learner. The teacher wants your child to be successful as much as a doctor would want his patient to be healthy.

After the conference. Share what you learned in the conference with your child as appropriate. Stress the positive throughout your discussion allowing any areas of weaknesses to be opportunities to set goals. Help your child make a plan to achieve that goal by listing steps towards that goal that are realistic and age appropriate.

Follow up with the teacher as needed to keep the teacher informed. Continue to review your child's homework each night, read notices sent home from school, and

check the school's web site for any additional communication at <http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmcwillises>.

We truly appreciate the opportunity to partner with you to make the most of this educational experience for your child. Working together we can help your child have a most successful school year.

Mr. Bill Stenger



Our school leaders, Mrs. Connie Dixon, Asst. Principal, and Mr. Bill Stenger, Principal.

WILLIS
ELEMENTARY HAS A
NEW WEBSITE!

[http://www.edline.net/
pages/sdmcwillises](http://www.edline.net/pages/sdmcwillises)

Check it out!

P.T.O. PAGE ... what's coming!

P.T.O.

We are off to a great start to our school year. The P.T.O. is trying hard to provide as many forms of communication to you as possible. The first newsletter and P.T.O. information guide were distributed and received with great reviews. Our weekly e-mail blasts and Facebook updates are wonderful ways to always be informed on the details of school and P.T.O. sponsored events.

We hope you have taken the opportunity to participate in the variety of Spirit Nights Willis has offered. We are thankful to our business partners that give us a percentage of the profits from Willis family purchases on these nights. These events are a great way to spend family time as well as benefit our school.

Our biggest fundraiser is the **Walk-a-thon**, which will be held **Friday, October 18th**. Your child will be bringing home additional information about this event very soon. Looking ahead, our **Holiday Fair** will be held at Willis on **Saturday, December 7th**. This will be a

new family event with activities for the entire family, including holiday shopping and outside fun and games. We will need many volunteers for both of these activities, please consider donating your time to either or both of these events.

It was so nice to see so many of you at our first P.T.O. meeting. Our next meeting will be held Thursday, October 3rd at 7:00p.m. in the Willis Cafeteria. We hope that an evening meeting will give families who are unable to attend during the day an opportunity to hear what the P.T.O. does for Willis and how you might be able to get involved. We look forward to seeing you there.

I want to personally thank all the amazing volunteers we have at Willis. Without your dedication, we would not be able to offer all the wonderful events we do. Please contact anyone on the P.T.O. if you are looking to get more involved. We welcome all!

Jillanne Conelias
P.T.O. President

WALK-A-THON

"OCTOBER 18TH"

Countdown 3...2...1! The Walk-A-Thon is almost here! Coming home soon in your child(rens) backpack is a packet of information about the Walk-A-Thon. This fundraiser was created so that we are able to focus on raising a majority of money at one event, rather than having to run multiple smaller fundraising events. Best of all, ALL of the proceeds from the event come back to the school, rather than only getting part of the proceeds. Student prizes may include the coveted Walk-A-Thon t-shirt, a trip to Jumpin' Fun Sports with your class, "Coach for a Day" for the student from each grade walking/running the most laps, and/or an invitation to the Kona Ice Party.

New this year: we will have a temperature gauge that will show our donation collection amount that we will send in our routine communications and display in the front lobby. Each year Mr. Stenger announces to the students' what he will be doing as a reward for reaching our fundraising goal (going on the roof, ducked taped to the wall, etc.). This year, the temperature gauge will show three levels of what Mr. Stenger is willing to do when a certain goal amount is raised. Encourage your child(ren) to send in envelopes as they receive donations so that they know how we are progressing, rather than having to wait until the event is over. Thank you in advance for your commitment to this event, as it means so much to what we are able to do for our students and for the school.

If you have any questions please contact co-chairs Elizabeth Pearce at ecpearce@yahoo.com or Jennifer Bianchini at jenniferb271@yahoo.com.

Go Geckos!

P.T.O. PAGE ... and more!

MOVIE NIGHT

Friday, October 25, 2013 at 6:30pm

“Hotel Transylvania”

5th Grade volunteers needed!

Contact: Shelley Simpson
ssimpson63@tampabay.rr.com

Proceeds to benefit 5th Grade Students

HOLIDAY FAIR

Saturday, December 7, 2013

11:00am - 4:00pm



Holiday Shopping & Fun for the Kids!

We need vendors to sell their wares, families to bake, and lots of volunteers!

Contact: Liz Combe at
liz.combe@hotmail.com &
Kara Beckie at usalbeckies@gmail.com

DO YOU HAVE A TARGET CREDIT/DEBIT CARD?

Did you know that if you register your Target Credit or Debit Card and designate Robert E. Willis Elementary School, Target will forward 1% of your total purchases to our school?

THIS IS FREE CASH FOLKS!

Sign up [here](#) or visit www.target.com and register for “TAKE CHARGE OF EDUCATION) (TCOE).

WELCOME OFFICER

If you are new to Willis Elementary and have questions about the school, the community or just need some general guidance, please contact the P.T.O. Welcome Officer, Liz Combe at liz.combe@hotmail.com.

BRICKS FOR SALE!

You can recognize your child’s enrollment at Willis by purchasing a 4” x 8” engraved brick for \$50 that will be laid in the school courtyard. Please fill out this [form](#) or purchase directly from the [Gecko Store](#).

LET THE MUSIC PLAY!

New musical instruments have arrived in the music room. The purchase was made with 2012-13 P.T.O. funds.

P.T.O. PAGE ... what we've done!

BOX TOPS RESULTS

Thank you to everyone who contributed Box Tops! The school collected over 10,000 Box Tops - that means over \$1,000 for just this collection! The following classes will be treated with a snow-cone party:

1st: Mrs. McGregor/3rd Grade (1,531 Box Tops)

2nd: Mrs. Brink/5th Grade (661 Box Tops)

3rd: Mrs. Turner/Kindergarten (537 Box Tops)

Start saving & clipping, the next collection will be Dec. 5th.

Our new Box Top Coordinator is Cathy Dobson, and she can be reached at cathy.m.dobson@gmail.com.

THANK YOU!

A big thank you to our local business sponsors who sponsored Spirit Nights:

- ★ CHICK-FIL-A
- ★ YOU SAY WHEN YOGURT
- ★ CHILIS
- ★ JUMPIN FUN TRAMPOLINE PARK

Also, thank you to our business sponsors who donated items for "Donuts with Dad":

- ★ FIRST WATCH (coffee)
- ★ TROPICANA (orange juice)
- ★ DUNKIN DONUTS (donuts!)

DONUTS WITH DAD

We had an amazing turnout for "Donuts with Dad" on Thursday, Sept. 26th. There were over 1,000 Dads/ special friends and students!

Thank you to all who attended AND to our event organizer, Nathalia Hadad. Also thank you to Elizabeth Pearce, Sarah Barker, and Jennifer Bianchini, who took hundreds of photos. Pictures taken will be sent home in your child's backpack soon.



Michael Bianchini at Donuts With Dad with his sons Johnny, 5th grade, and Joey, 4th grade.

P.T.O. Board 2013-14

Jillanne Conelias - President
jillanne67@verizon.net

Liz Combe - Vice President
liz.combe@hotmail.com

Kara Leckie - Treasurer
usaleckies@gmail.com

Shelly Steiner - Secretary
shellyrsteiner@yahoo.com

www.williselementarypto.com

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

WHAT DOES A COUNSELOR DO?

Services provided by the school counselor include orientation of new students; academic and career advisement; individual, group and classroom programs to help students learn about their interests and abilities; assistance in interventions which address behavioral, health, social skills, and/or academic issues; interpretation of

testing data; and consultation with teachers, administration and community agencies. School counselors are available at most school sites.

Willis is actively interviewing for a new counselor. The Counselor position is critical, and it is important that not only a highly qualified candidate is chosen, but one that is a good fit for our school community. Stayed tuned!

Clinic Notes for Fall 2013

Those pesky bugs called "lice" have been around since the beginning of time and it does not look like they will be going away anytime soon. Research has shown that most infestations do not occur in the school setting. However, we can be proactive and remember a few things to help prevent the spread of them.

We encourage no sharing of hair accessories, hats, or jackets. Remember that lice do NOT jump or fly. They crawl fast and are hard to see if you do not know what you are looking for. Nits (eggs) attach themselves to hair and cannot be removed easily where dandruff and hair products can be. Treatment

is with special shampoo and directions should be followed, along with follow up 7-10 days later. Use of insecticide sprays is not recommended. Head lice can only live 1-2 days away from the scalp. If you have any questions about lice recognition and/ or treatment please call or stop by the clinic and ask us.

Also, please note that flu season is just around the corner and that it is recommended that everyone get the flu vaccine for this year. Check with your healthcare provider to determine if this is right for you and your family.

Here's to your Health!
Nurse Mary & Nurse Kris
x2010 or x2011

FOOD SERVICE

Parents, please be sure to place your child's lunch money in a sealed envelope with his/her name on the envelope, as well as the teacher's name. A number of students have not been doing so, and we want to make sure the money you send in gets to the right account. You can also pay lunch money online at www.mypaymentsplus.com. If you don't have your child's I.D. # already, you can either call me or e-mail me so you can set up an account with MyPaymentsPlus. Breakfast and lunch menus can be found by linking [here](#).

If you want your child to eat breakfast at school, they need to be in the cafeteria no later than 8:15am so they have enough time to eat before the bell rings. A breakfast meal is \$1.10. Students that receive free or reduced lunches will also receive free or reduced breakfast.

It is \$3.00 for an adult meal if you would like to join your child for lunch.

Jeff Cardarelle-Hermans
Cafeteria Manager x2014
hermansj@manateeschools.net

FRONT OFFICE

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

As a reminder, students must wear School Uniforms every day. Every Friday (or the "last" day of the week if there is a holiday), students may wear a "Willis" t-shirt (e.g. Green Gecko, Walk-A-Thon shirt, or Runner's Club shirt). On "Dress Down" day, appropriate casual clothes may be worn as per [county policy](#). For more info on school uniforms, link [here](#).

SPECIALS

Physical Education with Coach Morales!

We've had quite a turn out for Runner's Club this year! Here are some tips if you are interested or already running along:

Runners' Club is free and **every Wednesday 7:30 am to 8:00am on the Willis Back Field** (weather permitting). Please check the [P.T.O. Facebook page](#) for last minute weather cancellations.

Parents please drop your kids at the field gate, or you may park in the school parking lot if you plan on participating with your children. Please don't park on the grass. Students may only leave Runners' Club with a parent. Those students without a parent must line up by their grade cone and they are walked into the cafeteria for breakfast if they want or they may continue to their classroom.

Runners collect sticks for each lap they run. The sticks must be returned when you are done running, so they may be recorded at the end the running session. Students may also wear comfortable running clothing for runners club and then change out to their school uniform when they get to class.

Awards: Foot tokens are earned for every 25 laps. At 75 laps students earn a Runners Club shirt. This years' new goal: run 100 miles (500) laps by the end of the school year! Laps run during their P.E. class warm-up may be added to their runners club total if they participate that week in runners club.

COMING SOON - 2013 WSSA STACK UP!

Guinness World Record Attempt: Most People Sport Stacking at Multiple Locations in One Day. November 4th during P.E. class at Willis. We will be cup stacking that week and doing a school order for the holidays. More info to follow!

Tuesday Morning Lacrosse: contact Coach Morales.

Coach Morales/moralesj@manateeschools.net
941-316-8245 x 2080



Music

All Third grade students will perform in the upcoming holiday music titled "**December in Our Town**" on December 12th at 6:30 pm. Everyone is invited to attend! On October 4th, any third grade students wishing to have a speaking part will need to audition. If you are interested, please get a permission slip from Mrs. Isaacs. This musical pays tribute to all the different holidays celebrated in December. If you are handy with creating simple costumes, please contact Mrs. Isaacs at isaacsc@manateeschools.net to help.

On Oct. 8th, all fourth and fifth grade students will go on a field trip with Mrs. Isaacs to attend the **Young Person's Concert** at the Van Wezel. The Sarasota Orchestra will perform this concert and it is **NOT TO BE MISSED!** Please feel free to have your 4th or 5th grade child write a thank you note to all the donors who made the trip possible for only \$5.00. You can turn the cards into Mrs. Isaacs and she will make sure the Sarasota Orchestra receives them.

Ms. Isaacs x2079



SPECIALS (cont.)



The Science Fair - October 24th

We are off to a wonderful start in the Willis Science Lab. The Kindergarten and first grade are learning how to make observations using their five senses, the second grade has been forming hypotheses and confirming them with results, the third grade has been designing their class project for the Science Fair, while the fourth and fifth grade are working on their individual projects.

I am always impressed at all the new and interesting ideas the students come up with. Please mark your calendars to view the **Science Fair projects on Thursday, October 24th from 3:30p.m. to 7:00p.m.** in our Cafetorium. See you there!

Amy Ross Bradl
Science Enrichment
Ext. 2021

Art with Mr. London

Art classes are off to a great start. In building a good foundation for future art projects, we started off with basic sketching techniques. Almost all art and design projects start off as a sketch.

In the younger grades the students surprised themselves when they realized that by recognizing basic shapes they can copy and draw familiar characters like Mickey Mouse and Charlie Brown. At the same time, we continue working on the basic coloring skills with crayons.

The older students used the same method with basic shapes to draw dolphins and other sea creatures. The majority of comic book and cartoon artists got their start by copying and drawing their favorite super heroes and characters. This not

only develops technique, it also builds confidence. I believe a good art program teaches the students about the great artists along with the technical skills and principles of art. The older students also completed research on five contemporary artists, and created a stimulus for our first project.

Marine muralist and sculpture Robert Wyland made an impression on them. We began learning how to draw dolphins, whales, sharks and manatees. The students were very motivated and the results were outstanding. The children are already a lot further along at this stage than I was at their age. There is nothing more rewarding for an art teacher than to have art students excited, ready, and eager to be creative.

Mr. London x2053

THE BOOK FAIR

was a huge success, surpassing sales from last year. Final numbers should be available within the next week.

We greatly appreciate the amazing support of our Willis community!

Media Center

A special thanks to the students, parents, and teachers who made our Fall Scholastic Book Fair a huge success. Also, special thanks to our numerous parent volunteers who transformed our Media Center into "The Reading Oasis."

If you get a moment, I invite you to check out the Media Center web site: <http://willismediacenter.blogspot.com>. Here you will find important info about our Media Center, student created media projects, volunteering opportunities, interesting articles about 21st Century Learning, and online learning opportunities for our students.

Mr. Sajewski x 2029



Kindergarten

The Kindergarten students are settling in well, getting to know their new routines and each other. The teachers are in the process of analyzing all the data collected from the FAIR and classroom assessments. We are eager to move forward and plan our instruction based on these results.

For the remainder of this quarter, the students will be working on:

- ★ Math: counting and Cardinal numbers up to 10, understanding numbers 11-19, and Geometry.
- ★ Reading: the students will be building habits for a literate life and growing ideas about stories.
- ★ Writing: the students will learn about the writing process, focusing on how to put ideas on paper and adding details.
- ★ Science: the students will be learning to “think like a scientist” and about objects and materials physical properties.
- ★ Social Studies: the focus will be how to be a good citizen and learning about our community. During this time the students will need to know their address and phone numbers so please help your child learn this information.

Our Apple Extravaganza was on September 25th, and we all had a great time. The students measured, sorted, counted, and balanced apples on their heads. Thank you parents for the donations and help!

1st Grade

Questions, Questions, Questions!

You may have noticed that your child has been asking a lot of questions while they read. This is an important reading strategy our student readers have been developing. When your child reads to you, continue to have them ask and answer questions about key details in the story.

Helpful Link for Questioning:

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/question_answer_relationship/

The students have made great progress using different strategies to solve addition and subtraction equations in Math. The students will continue using these strategies to solve problems with sums less than or equal to 20. We will continue to work with your child to solve equations and word problems with unknown numbers in any position.



Kindergarten's celebrating at Apple Extravaganza!



Mr. Violette's 1st Grade Class studying the "Constitution."

HALLOWEEN WORD JUMBLE!

1. LEESNKTO

2. SKMA

3. OMEZIB

4. THGOS

5. PIDERS

6. EARTT

7. MRSOTEN

8. PNMKUPI

9. DNACY

10. POKSOY

Science Kids ©

2nd Grade

Second Grade is off to a great start! We have been working hard building classroom routines and procedures. The Eight Keys of Excellence have helped us identify and practice good citizenship that we can carry out from school into our community.

Coming up next we will work on identifying characters and the challenges they face, practice becoming more fluent in our addition and subtraction facts, and explore various types of energy. We will also continue to write personal narrative stories about small moments in our lives, along with learning more about rules and laws.

We are looking forward to learning and growing together this year!



Mrs. French's 2nd grade class studies SCHEMA (the fancy word for "background knowledge"!).

3rd Grade

The third grade team is very excited about a field trip we will be taking on October 17th. We are partnering with the third graders at Samoset Elementary to go see "**The Math Maniac Show**" at the Van Wezel. We are piloting a program called "Classroom Connections" that will partner each of our classrooms with a classroom at Samoset. This program includes communication between schools pre-performance, the performance at the Van Wezel, a follow-up luncheon and activity with the Teaching Artists from the performance company, and a teleconference between schools and the performers the following week. We are thrilled to provide our students with the opportunity to work with peers from another school and such an enriching field trip.

We are still focusing on building reading stamina and making-meaning of complete text. Students are also learning to pick books that are "just-right" for them. We continue to model reading strategies and fluent reading with read-alouds. In regard to math, we will be moving into strategies for multiplication. Students need a foundational understanding of multiplication, but will also need to work towards automaticity of facts to support division. We suggest using flash cards at home to practice those facts!

4th Grade

Here is what some of our fabulous fourth graders from Mrs. Georgas' class love about fourth grade so far...

- ★ "More challenging lessons," Gabby R. and Joseph C.
- ★ "Doing the Mystery State, Georgas Genius Questions, and Numbers Count," Dillon R.
- ★ "Classroom novels with fun activities," Sebastian F., Hannah C., Alex B., and Andres M.
- ★ "Students are more mature," Kim K.
- ★ "More team and partner work", Celani G-V, Lindsay S., Kaitlyn S., and Dylan K.
- ★ "WRITING", Wesly V., Allison V., Maya R., Ezra K., Ella B.
- ★ "Math Superstars and the Bestimation Bag," Sam L., Anthony Z., and Nolwen B.



Mrs. Georgas' 4th grade class visits the Book Fair!

5th Grade

During the first part of the quarter, our fifth graders have been busy at work learning about the scientific process, various types of graphs, and many reading strategies. Please ask your child to share a bit about what they learn each day. Also, encourage him/her to write down all assignments in their agenda, and we ask that you sign this daily.

October 8th we will be going to the Symphony at Van Wezel. The students may either dress up (dress clothes), or come in uniform on this day. Mrs. Isaacs has already begun preparing the students for this event, and we look forward to a great day.

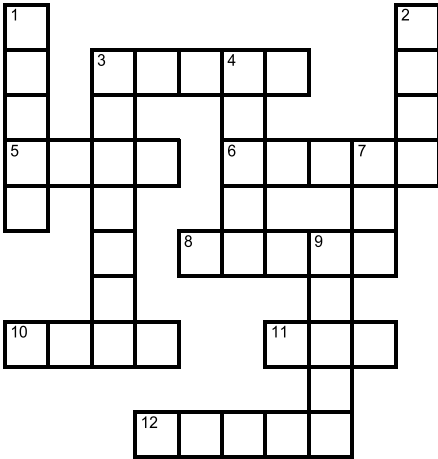
We have already had the opportunity to meet and speak with many of you. We will be meeting with all parents in October for our first quarter report card conferences. Keep your eye out for a sign up sheet or e-mail with a link to sign up for a conference time.

5TH Graders: SAVE THE DATE! Please make sure you and your parents put the "Recognition Ceremony" on June 4, 2014 on your calendar.



Fifth Graders work hard at math in Mrs. Tomlin's room!

FUN & GAMES!



Across

- 3. A funny costume.
- 5. What do you wear on your face?
- 6. ____-or-treat!
- 8. Scary thing that says boo.
- 10. Roasted pumpkin ____.
- 11. Small black animal that can fly.
- 12. Kids get lots of this.

Down

- 1. A monster with many bandages.
- 2. ____-o'-lantern
- 3. What do you wear on Halloween?
- 4. A woman with a pointy black hat.
- 7. A witch's pet
- 9. spooky



LANERNFISH HALLOWEEN
 (c) 2007 www.bogglesworldesl.com/halloween_worksheets.htm



- bat
- candy
- clown
- ghost
- Halloween
- moon
- pirate
- pumpkin
- spider
- vampire
- witch

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES CAN BE FOUND ON THE PTO WEBSITE [HERE](#).

GECKO GAZETTE

The Gecko Gazette will be published in Oct., Dec., Feb., April & June. For questions concerning the publication, please contact P.T.O. Newsletter Editor Christine Shaklik at shaklik@me.com.

Calendar of Events

October

- 2 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
Dress Down Day (\$2)
EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
- 3 P.T.O. Meeting (7:00pm)
- 4 Crispers Spirit Night
- 8 All Pro Dad's Breakfast (7:30-8:15am)
- 9 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 11 **NO SCHOOL (Inservice)**
- 16 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 17 Walk-A-Thon envelopes due
- 18 WALK-A-THON
- 21 **NO SCHOOL (Record Day)**
- 23 Tijuana Flats Spirit Night
- 24 Science Fair (3:30pm - 7:00pm)
- 25 Movie Night/Hotel Transylvania (6:30pm)
- 28 Square One Burgers Spirit Night
School Advisory Council Meeting (6:00-8:00pm)
- 30 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)

November

- 1 **EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)**
- 3 Daylight Savings Time (Fall Back 1 hour)
- 4 You Say When Yogurt Spirit Night
- 6 Dress Down Day (\$2)
Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 7 Class Pictures & Picture Re-takes (Uniform Req.)
- 8 **EARLY RELEASE (12:30pm)**
- 11 **NO SCHOOL (Holiday)**
- 12 Jimmy John's Spirit Night
- 13 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 14 Gecko Awards (TBA)
- 15 P.T.O. Meeting (2:00pm)
- 18 School Advisory Council Meeting (6:00-8:00pm)
- 19 All Pro Dad's Breakfast (7:30-8:15am)
- 20 Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
- 25-29 Thanksgiving Break

December

- 2 Chick-Fil-A Spirit Night
- 4 Dress Down Day (\$2)
Runners' Club (7:30am/Willis Back Field)
EARLY RELEASE (1:15pm)
- 5 Box Tops Collection
- 7 **HOLIDAY FAIR (link here for more dates!)**