ROBERT E WILLIS ELEMENTARY SAC MEETING

February 24, 2014

Present: Kristan Schwab, Bill Stenger, Connie Dixon, Liz Combe, Ashley Henderson, Jenny French, Denise Herrera, Tricia Eckstrom, Shannon McCoy, Chris Robertson, Christine Bradford, Jillanne Conelias, Stephanie Hefner and Lisa Albano

Dr. Greene – Deputy Superintendent of Instruction and Mrs. Saunders – Executive Director of Secondary Schools (acting Director of Elementary Schools)

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Kristan Schwab.

Old Business:

* The January 28, 2014 SAC meeting minutes were distributed for review. Motion by Christine Bradford, seconded by Denise Herrera to approve minutes with changes recommended. Motion passed unanimously.
* Safety – The new dismissal process went into effect on Feb. 18, 2014. The first week the dismissal time was impacted and it took until approximately 3:30 p.m. to finish. As of Feb. 24th there has been improvement and dismissal time finished by 3:18 p.m. Administration is aware that the new process is causing cars to be backed up onto Masters Ave as far as Lorraine Rd. A question was raised about the potential to add additional loading stations for end of day release in order to speed up dismissal. Mr. Stenger stated they are still looking at ways to improve the process. The committee also discussed the problems being encountered with the morning drop off procedures. Parents are dropping off in the bus lane to avoid the car pool line. Mr. Stenger has talked with the parents to tell them this is not allowed. Parents are also dropping children on public road beside the school. The district has been notified because this may require an additional crossing guard to ensure the children’s safety. The need for the fire lanes to be marked in the school parking lot was discussed again. This has been brought to the attention of the fire dept.
* Staffing – Mr. Stenger announced that the request for the replacement of the aide and custodial positions have been approved and hired.
* A+ Recognition Funds – The A+ Recognition Funds have been approved. The state has not yet released the funds to the district.
* SIP Mid-Year Review – Mrs. Dixon and Mr. Stenger provided an update on where we stand mid-year on our SIP progress. Willis is looking to improve 3rd, 4th and 5th grade scores in Reading, Math, Science and Writing. Dr. Greene has helped to implement an assessment program so we can monitor our progress on an ongoing basis. At this point we are doing okay in our progress for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades but we need to continue to make additional progress. The new assessment tools helps the schools monitor and target the specifics areas and students that need additional attention.
  + The 4th grade has the greatest need for improvement. Mrs. Conelias asked if this was typical across the district. Dr. Greene commented that the addition of FCAT Writes in 4th grade may attribute to why that grade needs more improvement in the other areas. The teachers need to focus more time on the writing because it cannot be connected to other subject areas due to the writing prompts/content on the exam. The additional focus on Language Arts and Math will come after FCAT Writes test.

New Business:

* FCAT Writes Test on February 25, 2014.
* Kristan Schwab requested we allow the committee to approve the SAC meeting minutes via email. The Committee will then be able to post the meeting minutes for the school in a timelier manner. Motion by Jillanne Conelias, seconded by Christine Bradford. Motion passed unanimously.
* Kristan Schwab reviewed the SAC by-laws and requested the by-laws regarding the formation of committees be amended. Motion to accept by Jillanne Conelias, seconded by Chris Robertson. Motion passed unanimously.
  + Article X. Committees Shall be amended to read:
    - Committees will be formed and guided by the Operational Guidelines of the School Advisory Council. All committees will function as advisory committees unless the School Advisory Council and principal delegate decision-making to them. The School Advisory Council Chair may create committees to address specific needs. These committees will report back to the School Advisory Council Chair and the principal. The existence of such committees shall terminate upon completion of the specified task.

Charter Schools: Dr. Greene and Mrs. Saunders from the school district attended the meeting to provide input on forming and running Charter Schools. Mrs. Schwab asked Dr. Greene to provide an overview on her experience with Charter School. Dr. Greene commented that there has been a lull in the creation of charter schools and Rowlett is the first school converting to a charter since 2005. As a general rule, the charters have been created in the past due to low performance of the traditional district school. The committee had an in-depth discussion including questions and answers with Dr. Greene and Mrs. Saunders regarding the process of becoming a charter school, reasons for becoming a charter (financial, performance), budget process including expense management, governance of the charter, maintaining your charter status and the review process, curriculum regulations, maintaining teachers, teacher pension plans, transportation, the building itself, legal representation, food services and potential property tax impact of changing from zoned school to charter. There are pros and cons for becoming a Charter School.  It is critically important to do the necessary research to completely understand the process and investigate all of the expenses to open and run a charter school.

Dr. Greene stated that Linda Guilfoyle is the liaison to charter schools for the district.

Dr. Greene provided insight into the Manatee County budget review process and outline for 2014-2015 school year. She believes there will be $8 million positively redirected for the 2014-15 school. The superintendent is committed to looking at staffing improvements.

Dr. Greene is recommending 2 Elementary Executive Directors and that all elementary schools have a Principal, Assistant Principal and Dean of Discipline, paraprofessionals – 1 to every 5 teachers for Kindergarten and 1 to every 10 teachers for 1st through 5th and .50 SRO for every elementary school.

The district is committed to staffing appropriately for 2014-2015 – first priority is schools and second priority is district. The planning process starts March 11, 2014.

Mrs. Conelias asked Dr. Greene how the district got to a positive financial outlook for next year when there have been so many years of financial problems and deficits. Dr. Greene responded that the district cut $30 million in positions, reviewed how the district gets paid, cleaned FTE process, sold properties and looking at ways to recoup money. She asked that we try to have faith in the new team in place in the district. They are hopeful we will have positive results before the end of the 2013-14 school year.

Next SAC Meeting: March 17, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Denise Herrera, seconded by Tricia Eckstrom. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tricia Eckstrom, Vice Chair