**Hartsfield Elementary School**

**School Advisory Council Meeting**

**January 19, 2016 / 5:30-6:30**

**Minutes**

Chair: Vernisha Howard

Secretary: Will Hanley

Present: Judy McDowell, Grace Frances, Nidia Tew, Natasha Smith, Crystal Ward, Lisa Urban, B.J. Van Camp, Chuck Birmingham, Rich Templin, Shenelle Brown, Tomoko Baldridge, Brenda Mills, Garrett Riggs, Marie-Claire Leman, Derrick Brown, Sharon Kant-Rauch, Mary Jo Peltier, Nancy Oakley, Cheryl Stinson, Katherine Solz, Michelle Boston, Letashia Betsey, Demetria Selmore, Wynette Williams, Nancy Stokley, Danny, Greg Downing, Coral Shieve, Erika C. Green-Clark, Shauna Thompson, Carolyn Lafaille, Nicole Lafaille, D. Burnett, Gregory Holloway, Albert Wynn, Superintendent Rocky Hanna.

Regrets: Bridgett Birmingham

1. Call to order: 5:35
2. Introductions
3. Approval of minutes November 17, 2016. Approved (moved Templin/Frances).
4. Updates: all submitted in writing except Principal’s report
5. PTO
6. Parental and Community Involvement
7. EDEP
8. DAC
9. TAC
10. Trauma-sensitive initiative
11. Principal.

The Principal distributed a handout. Star Assessment trend in growth is positive. Principal Van Camp explained the metrics used to measure proficiency and the standards employed.

Derrick Brown: Why is the proficiency of 5th graders in math at 35%? Van Camp: Every year the standards get more difficult. Gaps show more in transitioning years. This is the hardest test these kids will take until 8th grade, and the jump is big from 4th to 5th.

Coral Shieve: How does Hartsfield compare to other schools? Van Camp: I don’t have the familiarity to speak to that. Title I schools have a challenge getting our demographic to meet the standards.

Natasha Smith: These numbers are comparable to Ruediger. There have been changes here that have helped, such as moving certain skilled teachers from fifth to first grade. Shieve: I am surprised by the drop off from 3rd grade towards 5th grade. Natasha Smith: These figures match up with other Title I results. Amy: regardless of poverty, everyone in the county should expect the same results. Important to make the plan solid all the way around, serve all of the kids and not rely too much on the effect of placing certain teachers in strategic grades.

Templin: how do these numbers compare with numbers in years in which we’ve received D grades, which is important considering that we’re facing a turnaround intervention if we receive another D.

Shauna: How are we going to handle stress trickling from principal to teachers to students to homes?

Van Camp: We have built a foundation in our home, they give us their best effort. The data looks better than last year. 47% vs 52% for 3rd grade reading, for example. But what we’ve found in previous years is that as we make progress, the standards change, and we have to change our approach.

Chuck Birmingham: Is this historical information online? Van Camp: Yes.

1. Superintendent Hanna Q & A

Introduced at 6:06 p.m. Commented on the size of the gathering. This school is getting lots of attention from the district. It is facing challenges other schools don’t. School grading paints a picture that sometimes just isn’t true. Trying to figure out innovative programs that we can embed to attract students. We are not waving a white flag with this school, but it’s not going to happen overnight. Thanks Ms. Urban for coming in to help. He grew up in Indianhead Acres, and is well aware of the strength of this school and this school community.

He received a list of questions in advance, and will respond to them.

1. What are the turnaround options and what is the turnaround plan? We’re not waving white flag, just looking at how we can prepare the kids for the tests, but also treat them as kids, let them play, teach them civic responsibility. It’s turned into a game of numbers. Accountability is not a bad thing, but we need to understand that they’re kids. The pressures on teachers and kids is uncalled for at times. Shieve: do we have a choice not to wave the white flag? When does the state come in? Hanna: At a certain point, the state becomes very prescriptive: that is the turnaround. Right now, we are all hands on deck—we’ve committed every resource we have to this school to keep this from happening. The state has done it before to other schools. It comes with the whole stigma attached to schools labeled failing. It’s apples and oranges: many kids here haven’t had the advocates and support when they arrive at the doors in kindergarten. “Achievement gap” starts before kindergarten. We need to emphasize the early years. Shieve: what could the state do, what would happen? Hanna: we’re focused on tomorrow and next week, not on next year—we’re not there yet. Leman: her understanding is that we’re in the turnaround planning phase now, and the implementation phase next year. SAC needs to work on this. Who decides which of the five options for turnaround is followed? She was under the impression that that choice is made before the results arrive at the end of school year. Hanna: I’ve recently been sworn in, and I’m not there yet. Leman: it feels like this is an emergency measure to get a C, and we’re letting a lot of things go that impair our quality of life for students and teachers now, which will drive still more parents away and drive us towards another D in future years. The regime of emergency does this. Hanna: this is what we’re doing now, not the long term plan for this school. There are lots of ways to be creative, embed magnets. This is aiming to avoid sanctions from the state. Van Camp: Thank you for your response to the call for help. These numbers are where we are before the support came—it came after the holidays. The process is systematic, building capacity, takes time. Our focus needs to be this, because the consequences are dire. But we work hard to avoid them being robots. Art, choir, drums are extras that we have.

Wynn: Thank you for coming, I realize you inherited this situation. The change should have come earlier, when the decline began. But how do we go about gaining support from parents who are not here, but parents past and future? I think that forcing teaching to the test, in a compressed and rushed way, takes us away from the basics that might really help us to achieve. Hanna: The community appears very involved and informed tonight. Scores are a moving target; no way to avoid it. Segregation comes with the school scores, and he’s concerned about it.

Downing: I am a strong advocate of parent involvement. This is a large crowd, but how do we reach out to others? Can we make robo calls to Hartsfield parents? Parents are young and need to be reached in different ways. Parents can’t contact other parents under the current system. I’d like to be able to call the other parents in my kid’s class. Can the district help us? Could there be a classroom captain in each class, with all of the numbers, to reach out to the other parents? Smith: Four of us here have seven kids in kindergarten; list serve allows us to get in touch. Downing: if our kids have trouble reading, part of it is that their parents have trouble reading—sending a letter home is not effective. The method of outreach is important. Listserv might not do it. Smith: if everyone here volunteered an hour a week, we could be the change—there are a lot of us. Downing: the parents who are here are not the parents I’m talking about. I appreciate all that you are saying. In order for us to turn Hartsfield around, we need to meet them. Solz: the way to turn it around is to touch students. Mentors sitting down for 10 minutes and talking to them can turn them around. Our #1 job is to teach the reading and math standards—that is our contract.

Frances: We love the school, but it’s not the school it was 3 years ago. We don’t care about the school grade. We have lost PE, field trips, science teacher, science fair. There is stress, angry voices towards students. I meet families every day who say they are waiting to get into a better school. The kids care about what they experience every day, not the test. We are focusing on the test to the exclusion of the things that make the school a good place to be. Hanna: we’re in this together, conflict won’t solve things; everyone is here because they care. We need to improve things one day at a time. How do we get kids to wake up and want to go to school? That’s our job. Yes, they have to learn reading and math.

Shieve: Mr. Downing’s comments indicate that there is a lack of means to communicate with other parents. She has signed up for everything, but we don’t have a way to reach out to other parents. Paper communication in backpack doesn’t work. My son comes to school because he wants to see his friends, but he’s not happy and excited to be at school. I’m one of the parents looking for other schools—I want my kid to be happy, and I want to build a community. I don’t know the parents who don’t come on field trips. The community school could be a hub bringing people here outside of school hours. Knowing other people in the community means that people will hold each other accountable—parents and kids. Downing: Can the district provide us access to the phone bank? Hanna: I can’t give you peoples’ phone numbers, but we can maybe call just Hartsfield parents.

Templin: There are 3 times more people here than at a typical SAC meeting. We have been pursuing better school grades with drilling since I’ve been here, and it’s never worked. We’ve never been able to have a conversation at SAC assessing whether it’s worked. All the ideas we’ve come up with at SAC have been subsumed in drill, test, drill, test, and it’s never worked. Parents have been here month in, month out, dedicated, and the things we bring have been met with resistance. We’ve been treated as though criticizing the system is criticizing the teachers. So why are we doubling down on what’s not been working and has taken us to the precipice? We are on the edge of a cliff—are we going to keep doing the same thing or do something different?

Brown: I agree with some of Frances’ comments, disagree with some. This is a very caring school—the teachers care. Tradition, commitment, caring are his principles. Before I ask more of the teachers, I need to ask more of myself at home.

Leman: What is the situation with substitute teachers district-wide? The situation here seems to be more volatile than in the past. Is it harder for Hartsfield to find subs?

Selmore: There are more resources that subs could use: Lincoln gives you a folder when you arrive. Sensitivity training for the teachers, in how they handle the subs. Shadowing to learn the systems of a school. Trial by fire is the norm.

Carolyn Lafaille: Listening to this conversation, I understand the importance of us coming together with a plan of action. There are communication gaps. The connection with parents and guardians can be difficult. We need a plan so that key people can get involved in the children’s lives. Do we have a plan for Hartsfield? There are a lot of ideas around. Some kind of communication needs to reach all of us, so we can come together. We need the action to be taken as quickly as possible. I go way back at this school, and I’m amazed at the change at the school.

Wynn: An informed parent base is the strength of the school, helps them support the teachers and alleviate the pressure. We need to reach out to people without the social capital that most of us at this meeting have.

Smith: Can we pick our own subs? I wanted to be a sub here. I tried, but couldn’t find a job here.

Van Camp: Yes, but only after they’ve gotten through the interview process. Hanna: This is not the first time we’ve heard this. We have HR issues, and we want to address them.

Smith: I have stopped stressing my kid about the tests, and she’s doing better. I don’t care what the school grade is going to be. We parents need to come up with our own plan, and tell the school what it’s going to be. We’ve done it the way the school tells us, and it’s just stressed out our kids. Can we decide what different way we can do it, not stress anymore?

Carolyn Lafaille: Weekend school might be a good idea. More parents in the classroom, especially male, would be good. We should have more male teachers. Children aren’t getting enough recess time. Impressed with what they’re learning, but they need wiggle time. Kids seem not to be getting enough food in the lunchroom.

Leman: We have a feedback sheet for parents who might have more comments—they can fill these in and drop them off with or without names.

1. Announcements and/or Other Information for the Good of the Order

Wed Feb 15, 6 p.m.—parent night at Orange Avenue apartments. South City. Dr. Billy Cross, FSU assistant professor in criminology, will speak. He has a big background in working with students in reading. Will speak about his background in athletics and beyond. Dinner and childcare provided. Will also spread information about the rollout of the mobile medical unit.

Amy raised a concern that we are not reaching out to potential parents outside the South City. Stanson: these are the parents we’re trying to reach, the parents we’ve been discussing. Amy remains skeptical about the effectiveness of this approach.

Kant-Rauch: can we know by next meeting what the turnaround options are, and what role the SAC will play in it? Hanna: I’ll be prepared for the next meeting.

Riggs: Can we communicate this turnaround information to all of the parents? I was not aware until three weeks ago that the school faces this situation. We should communicate this.

1. Adjournment: 7:16 p.m.

Next meeting: February 16, 2017.