The meeting was held on Monday, December 2, 2013 from 8:00 am to 9:00 am in the Newcastle conference room. Present: Marla Newton, Jacqueline Park, Danielle Dixon, Kim Plowman, Edana Peacock, Sarah McKenzie, Terry Vanpelt, Eileen Rubenstein, Kristin Cakarnis and Richard Crispo. Absent: Laura Berry. Donna Wood attends meetings to take notes.

Agenda:

1. **PTSA Report**
   The Polar Express is underway. The nominating committee will be elected at the January general membership meeting. The nominating committee’s job is to present the slate of EC nominees prior to voting on it at the April general membership meeting. They are hoping to have a representative from each grade level (K-5) to cover all new and existing families. Kim will be gone from Newcastle next year and Edana can’t serve another year as President.

   Edana shared that the student directory has been proofed and looks good. It is at the printer and should be back this week.

   PTSA winter event is scheduled for the last Friday in January. There currently isn’t anyone chairing this event but they think there is someone interested in doing it. There will be inflatables at the event but PTSA will be selective in which ones they do. There also is no one chairing the Spring Walk-a-thon yet.

   A new videographer needs to be found as the person that did this last year is too busy. Marla asked if anyone knew when spirit wear would be arriving. It should be here within the next 10 days.

2. **Community Report**
   Rich shared that there are 66 new homes in our area that should be completed by next September; 14 at NC Vista, 24 at Lake Boren and 28 at Trails on Coal Creek.

   The 95 year old gentleman that has lived in Newcastle his whole life has just been moved into a senior home in Bellevue. He has donated all his Newcastle artifacts—some of which are from 150 years ago. Rich shared that the school could borrow some of these artifacts so students could get a glimpse of what life was like long ago. It was asked if some items could be displayed at the winter event to try and gain some interest from families/students. Rich mentioned that pictures and talks have taken place at the Newcastle library.
Eileen and Rich are going to talk separately on some items, i.e., traffic flow problems surrounding Newcastle ES. Eileen knows that things have been discussed before and no resolutions have been found. Edana thought it would be a good idea if we could put our heads together to try and come up with changes, even if they are small changes.

3. **Building Report**

*Pre-arranged absences around pre-existing breaks:* Marla shared that we are seeing more and more students gone from school due to family vacations. Lots of families are tagging additional days off onto existing school breaks, i.e., 30% of Liza Rickey’s 4th grade class was gone the days leading up to Thanksgiving break. We also have families that aren’t planning on returning to school until mid-late January following winter break. The following reasons were discussed as to why this could be happening: Family time is precious, airfare is higher during times when school districts are out of school, one or both parents are unable to go on vacation during District scheduled days off so they need to go at a different time, parents realize it will be harder to pull their student out of school once they hit the secondary schools so they are choosing to do their travelling now, typically things are winding down around holidays so the thought is that it’s less impactful to be gone then. Marla can deny absences which would make them unexcused. After 7+ unexcused absences families have to go to truancy court. Marla discusses absences with parents that are requesting pre-arranged absences if their student is getting 1’s and 2’s on their report card.

*Impact on classrooms:* It is very impactful to have students gone for family vacations and miss classroom time. Sarah shared that the new curriculum is very rigorous with lots of instruction and interaction between the students and teacher. There is no way to recreate this for students that were absent. It becomes harder to meet common core standards when students are gone for extended absences.

*Teacher expectations (homework):* Marla shared that teachers are not to be expected to provide homework prior to absences. Kim asked why you wouldn’t want to do this so the student would stay current. Gone are the days of work packets that could easily be handed out. Homework is based on instruction that was presented on that particular day. It is too hard for teachers to prep that far out. Their plans are a guide as to what they will be teaching and plans can change based on interactions with the students. Jacqueline asked if teachers could provide information on parent resources that parents could check out for themselves. Edana feels that that would be too much on the teachers to provide that type of information.

Several families requested to pick up their report cards early since they were going to be gone on the day they were handed out. Marla will remind families that report cards don’t get handed out early and they will receive their report card upon their return.
4. **Volunteers and Non-school Age Siblings**

*Policy 4311-community relations:* Marla has asked site council to devise language and expectations to put out to families regarding bringing siblings under 5 to accompany them while volunteering. District Policy 4311 states that adults only should be volunteering during the school day. Last month Marla handed out Endeavor and Grand Ridge’s policies regarding siblings in the building for members to review. General thought is that if you are here volunteering then your younger child should not come with you. Topics discussed were:

**Differentiate:** Have a clear distinction between being at school as a volunteer vs. being at school to attend a function, i.e., Mochas with Marla and assemblies. There should be no exceptions when volunteering in a classroom. Volunteers should be viewed as an extension of the teacher.

**Clarify gray areas:** Can former NC students come to volunteer? What if parent is only working in the hallway? What if parent is here doing art docent work? Can ½ day kindergartners be here during their non-school time—are they still covered under District insurance?

**Why implement a sibling policy:** Younger siblings can be disruptive to the classroom and also to groups working in the hallways. They shouldn’t be in the workrooms and out on the playground but often are.

**Benefit of policy:** Tightens up school rules and have them in place for when we need to uphold them. Having a clear, school-wide policy makes it easier to empower teachers and staff to have these difficult conversations. Easier to enforce if school-wide. Library and cafeteria also need to be viewed as classrooms so rules need to apply there as well.

**How implement:** Suggested to become part of yearly WSP procedure. Put out specifics to parents (no flyer), have parents sign that they have read them. Come up with documentation such as ‘Volunteering Best Practices’, focus on positive language, i.e., thanks for volunteering, etc. Kristin asked if we could work as a team, PTSA and site council. NOTE: Marla indicated that this would be enforced by herself and school staff.

**Concerns of policy being implemented:** Student will be sad their parent can’t be here. Will we create negative feels amongst families? School could be viewed as inhospitable if siblings aren’t allowed. Don’t want to shun parents and make school feel unwelcoming to upcoming students.

**Miscellaneous:** Kim likes Grand Ridge’s policy although it doesn’t address having graduated students on campus. She feels that older kids are good role models. Younger siblings are often brought into the library to check out books. Maybe this should change to before/after school or families schedule time in advance with Laura to bring in the younger sibling. The structure that Newcastle opened up with has loosened considerably, i.e, there should only be 3 parties per year but we routinely hear that a party is taking place in classrooms.
Marla will discuss this with Laura and the staff. Council will work on verbiage to be discussed at February meeting.

**NC Handbook and Other School Practices:** Ran out of time to discuss.

**Other school practices:** Ran out of time to discuss.

5. **Other/Future Agenda Items**

No meeting in January, 2014. Rich, Edana and Eileen will be meeting to discuss on-going traffic flow issues. Revisit how it’s going in the lunchroom. Question was asked why students are no longer allowed to go back to the class room if they forgot their lunch. Decision was made by certificated school staff, based on the following factors: students only have 20 minutes to eat-going to get lunchbox reduces time to eat; become a daily habit for lots of kids-older kids more of a problem, takes staff away from their duties to take students to class rooms. With safety measures, classroom doors are locked if teacher/class will not be present for more than 10 minutes.