

School Climate Results

This survey of school climate was administered to all FRREA members in June of 2022. 18 members responded out of our 26 members. The results have been streamlined into four categories that concerns were voiced in, general feelings, office staff, principal/superintendent, and staff relationships. No responses have been left out and everything that we received can be found in the results below.

Moving forward our membership would like the climate of our school to improve. We would like to work in an environment where everyone is respected and conflict is resolved peacefully. We would like a more present administration where everyone works collaboratively to make the school a welcoming environment.

General Feelings

Overall, I feel grateful to be a part of FRES as the students, families and staff are generally pleasant, respectful and caring. I appreciate the autonomy I have over my classroom and that requests for materials and curriculum are usually approved by administrators. I'm also thankful that administrators and staff are very understanding about family situations and have never made me feel bad about needing to care for my family even when it was inconvenient.

I feel like the climate has changed over time at the school. I have worked at the school for many years and I'm not pleased with the current school climate. Our school is an extremely stressful place to work where teachers and staff no longer work cooperatively as a team. People just come to work and try to get through the day, we don't support each other, we don't have the proper leadership, teamwork and motivation that we used to have.

Overall, the climate is wonderful, with so many colleagues and staff who are collegial and friendly and supportive of all that we each do. We feel proud to work here and feel respected for our skills and what we have to offer. There are, however, a few bad apples, who give this gem of a place a few rotten spots. Every workplace has its problems and we are not so unique that we don't have ours!

As a long term teacher at FRRSD, I want to emphasize the joy I have working at our school. I love what I do and I love the children and the rest of the staff, despite any difficulties I encounter. I manage to resist "drama" and prefer to focus on my job and my priorities which are to provide the best education I can to the children I teach, and maintain my professional demeanor at all times. Speaking up about any

problems, as I have, does not diminish the love I have for this school and for my position. I hope instead it shows just how much I do care about keeping this gem of a school in high regard for each of us who work her and within our community.

My opinion is the school climate is toxic and many employees do not know what professionalism and confidentiality is!

In my opinion, the climate is not as nurturing as one might expect to find in a small elementary school. Staff, at times, are spoken to disrespectfully by administrators and there seems to be a good deal of pettiness amongst some staff members

The climate at our school has become very toxic. It used to be a place I was proud of and enjoyed coming to, but it has become a place unfortunately that I dread.

The school climate at Farmington River is not good. It has not been good for a very long time. The decline of the school climate did not start with the closing of school in March 2020. There were many existing issues prior to Covid. The issues just became more obvious and more apparent during the critical time of Covid when clear, specific direction and leadership was absolutely necessary.

Farmington River has the potential to be an incredible school. However, it has become an environment where major issues exist:

- Staff are divided
- It is an environment of distrust
- There is the potential for danger
- Hostility is present
- Communication is poor

ENVIRONMENT

- General cleaning is not done on a regular basis
- Soap and paper towel dispensers are often empty
- Classrooms and other areas of the building are not routinely cleaned
- There were periods of time when an entry door was not in working order, making it difficult to enter or exit the building
- Window screens often fall out of the windows and are left on the ground for weeks
- The playground often has food wrappers and used masks lying on the ground
- Student arrival, dismissal, assemblies and recess routines are not clearly defined and communicated to all staff. There are many inconsistencies.
- Training is not provided in developing age appropriate social emotional competencies in students
- Progress is not assessed using student and staff feedback and other data sources to make adjustments as necessary

- Expectations for student behavior is inconsistent and not clearly defined.
- Training is not provided for staff to uphold expectations
- School wide routines, policies and systems are not in place

ETHICS

- One school committee policy that was not consistently followed was mask wearing. An administrator was one of the staff not following the policy.
- What are other school committee policies? What policies should Farmington River staff be aware of?
- Poor professional judgement is demonstrated
- Unprofessional comments are made about staff and school committee members
- Serious school and staff issues are dismissed and not addressed
- Some staff are allowed / given power and control over areas that do not pertain to their job responsibilities
- Staff confidentiality is not protected
- Unprofessional staff behavior is tolerated
- One specific staff is allowed to behave in a hostile manner toward others

PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

- Expectations for staff is low
- Expectations are not clearly defined
- Expectations are not revisited or renewed
- Core values and mission statement is not known
- Staff commitment to core values and mission statement is not secured
- The mission or core values is not used to guide decision making
- Meetings lack clear purpose and are primarily used for one way informational updates
- Meetings do not focus on matters of consequence
- Participants are not engaged in thoughtful and productive conversations and deliberations
- Matters of consequence are left unclear, unresolved, no specific direction or action plan is put in place (ex. when an angry person arrived on campus and approached staff in a verbally aggressive manner in front of the school building)
- It is unclear who the administrator on duty is and when they are actually in the building
- Clear protocols and procedures are not in place
- A culture is created that minimizes the importance of individual differences
- Ineffectual interpersonal, written or verbal communication is not demonstrated
- Emails are often a brief comment or directive without context or clear action plan
- Emails often result in staff having many questions regarding what the real issue is and what the expectation is
- Reflection on leadership practices or demonstrating new ways of thinking about

administration and leadership does not occur

- A shared vision is not created
- Response to disagreement or dissent is not productive
- A limited range of strategies is relied upon to resolve conflicts that do not result in constructive resolutions
- Concerns about staff unprofessional and hostile behavior is dismissed, minimized and invalidated
- There is not an attempt to build consensus within the school community
- Some staff are allowed to behave in an unprofessional and hostile manner

It has been very frustrating to work in an environment where it is not safe to share concerns and have them addressed. It is also frustrating to observe school committee meetings where limited, inaccurate information is shared about the school and questions are not asked to get more information about what is really happening.

A quick google search about school climate will bring up lots of great descriptions such as the following, "School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. It has been described as 'the heart and soul of the school ... that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day.'" With a heavy heart I must admit, that although this was not always the case, at this point in time I do not "love the school" and often do not "look forward to being there".

School climate encompasses many important things of which I realize cannot all be addressed here so I will do my best to highlight those I feel are most critical in nature and align with what I feel is the purpose of this "survey". In response to the question, my "opinion regarding the school climate at Farmington River Elementary School" is that of distrust, division, and hostility. Though I do look forward to being in the classroom with students every day, the climate is such that I do not look forward to being elsewhere in the building for many reasons. I can't count how many times I have gotten that awful burning feeling in my gut while driving to work anticipating the approach to the front door, walking through the lobby and hallways, or having to go into certain offices as a result of so many disappointments and negative experiences.

DISTRUST

I would like to describe distrust in the school climate as the inability to count on or believe that those in positions to make effective change will listen, be supportive, follow through, or take necessary actions to promote the growth of our school, especially if it includes discomfort and/or effort. Please see the following examples

to support why I feel the FRES climate is layered with distrust.

To begin, school committee meetings are very uncomfortable and difficult to watch for many reasons. When general questions have been asked to inquire about how things were going, they were often matched with general feedback such as “things are great”. This was always hard to swallow because often that response did not at all accurately depict how things were going, things have been far from great for quite some time. The lack of interest/effort for specificity and follow through along with the repeated display of dishonesty made it such that I did not want to attend and watch the show. Additionally, it often seemed that when some school committee members did try to address important but difficult or uncomfortable matters they were shut down, met with disdain, contempt, or disrespect from other school committee members. To me the lack of support for one another reflected and solidified the feeling of distrust in the school committee and that there would be a similar lack of support for us (faculty/staff). It often appeared that the goal of each school committee meeting was to check things off the list, keep things light and fluffy, and to maintain the status quo. It was disappointing to see that at this level there was minimal support for each other in working towards a greater good. Every place has areas of weakness that can be addressed and improved, things can always be stronger for tomorrow than they were today. I feel like the message that was being sent by the school committee when these important issues would be brought up and quickly shot down demonstrated a desire to not ruffle any feathers. Mind you this is all amidst discussions about improving our test scores. Change does not happen if we ignore important and uncomfortable situations. With that said, from the very top of the totem pole a sense of distrust was created in the school climate.

I would like to end by sharing that as a result of the climate at Farmington River Elementary School, I feel as though I am constantly swinging between feeling discouraged and resigned. Brene Brown described these two emotions concisely in her book, *Atlas of the Heart* published in 2021:

“Discouraged: I’m losing my confidence and enthusiasm about any future effort - I’m losing the motivation and confidence to persist.”

and

“Resigned: I’ve lost my confidence and enthusiasm about any future effort - I’ve lost the motivation and confidence to persist.”

I am grateful for this opportunity to vocalize my opinions regarding this critical topic, school climate, that greatly influences school achievement and success for

our students. For so long I have felt like a bystander, silently enabling conditions I know are not right (based on the MA state standards) as a result of no real way to vocalize critical matters that negatively impact our faculty/staff and students. Though this is only a brief summary of the experiences within the school climate which have led me towards discouragement and resignation, I am hopeful that this could be a step in the right direction for rebuilding what once was a trusting, safe, comfortable, and productive school climate; the true “gem” that Farmington River Elementary School could and should be for the students and community, but most certainly is not. Thank you very much for your time and attention to this critical element of school success.

COLD - TENSE

Office Concerns

I started Farmington many moons ago. When I first started teaching, the climate and respect that staff, faculty and administrators had for each other was amazing. The faculty and staff bonded, the environment was positive, everyone was aware of their role and responsibilities within the building. Now that has all changed, unfortunately many roles are blended, and there is no “set” role. There is a clear division between office staff and teachers. The environment is tense. If you need supplies for your classroom, it has become easier to purchase them yourself, rather than deal with the wrath of Paula. Her attitude is unprofessional toward certain staff, she walks around in her socks throughout the day, talks to other staff members, and is upset if other office staff are not at their desk.

Teresa is a secretary for the superintendent, unfortunately her role seems to have a major part in decision making for what is best for the school. She is somehow aware of everything that goes on in the building, with staff and faculty, students and families. There is no confidentiality whatsoever. She has also bullied Neesha in the past, making snide comments about her, being rude and condescending toward her, and going as far as handing her a job posting for another district. Morning meetings are conducted on a regular basis in Eric’s office with Tom, Paula and Teresa. The amount of laughter coming from the office makes me inclined to think that they are not talking business.

Lastly, the teachers work very hard with their students to make sure that everyone is enjoying school, and learning. As a teacher, I would love to have administrative staff (other than Mike) peek in and see the amazing things that the teachers are doing in their classrooms.

I think the school climate since COVID has been terrible. It seems like the people in the office feel that they were the only ones that worked during the shutdown in March and they have no respect for the teachers or paras. Every day, the superintendent meets in the business office with Paula, Eric, and Teresa at least 2

times a day for extended periods of time rather than working on what they should be doing. It feels as though the building is being run by the decisions of Paula, Teresa and Eric rather than Tom because he gives them the power to make decisions that should not involve them. In most school districts the business office and Teresa as the assistant to the Superintendent would have no dealings with daily issues that involve teachers and students, yet this is happening all the time. Their offices are often not even in the same building. There is no confidentiality with the Principal/Superintendent. He tells the office staff almost immediately about any conversation you have with him, even if it is confidential. I don't feel that the teachers are given professional courtesy at all. Teachers are not given access to the supply closet because "we will steal things" and "we can't be trusted". Instead they are forced to ask Paula for things and she is often rude in her response. Paula bullies Tom and Mike about the time cards all the time, even after they have signed off on them. We watched Jeff do very little work, yell and be intimidating to teachers and paras for years with no consequences. We have watched Paula be rude and mean to staff members and walk around the building in her socks all day. If it's a payroll week we were asked to not go into the business office, even if we have a question, because Paula is too busy. We have watched Teresa do Jeff's job, bully the assistant to the Principal, intervene in student issues, yell at parents, all while spending a lot of the day in other people's offices since Jeff left. Before that, Jeff was in her office for hours during the day. It has been very very demoralizing to watch Tom allow the unprofessional and sometimes hostile behavior of Jeff, Teresa, and Paula and give them the authority to make decisions when they don't have the experience or the education of the teaching staff in the building who have spent their careers dedicated to the education and well-being of children.

My opinion on this question would be that there were many of the staff that were dedicated and willing educators who made this unfortunate time in our school year work. They put in extra time and effort to give the students the best education they could. Unfortunately, there were administrators and other staff members who took it as a time to complain, criticize, and not do the best for the students at FRSD. This lack of dedication has continued since the closing in March, and has gotten worse in my opinion.

The leadership in the school is almost non-existent and too much power has been given to the front office employees and the secretary to the superintendent. There is also no confidentiality what so ever, because any information told to the principal is shared with the office staff.

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, "May respond respectfully to disagreement and dissent, but relies upon a limited range of strategies to resolve conflicts that do not always result in constructive resolutions." – Needs Improvement • Fear of

retaliation for speaking out

- Hostile response when asked challenging questions
- Paula is allowed to be openly hostile even after multiple, at least 5 documented instances, reported to Tom in the past 6 months alone. • Continues to go unaddressed. Or if it is addressed it is not effective as this continues.
- Paula spends vast amounts of time in Denise's office during the workday. This time equates to hours over the course of a week. This is also easily verified by checking the cameras.
- Teresa continuously does an ineffective job at most tasks that she is assigned.
 - For example, the daily attendance of staff is often inaccurate or misleading.
 - Has sent racist and offensive emails.
 - Recess, which occurs every day, is almost always not staffed properly when there is indoor recess.
 - Prior to Jeff's "retirement" she and Jeff were often found in her office talking. • Often breaks confidentiality by gossiping. This too is documented

First, there is no reason, ever, to be short or rude to any staff or intimidate anyone due to personal problems or bias. When someone acts this way, it stands out because it is in such contrast to the way the rest of the faculty and staff behave. This has been the case for one person in our business office with such a bristly personality that makes almost everyone in the building resist asking for her help. Someone who expresses concern about this to our administration and sees their experiences with this person as a barrier to asking for help or getting things done in an efficient manner, should be granted immediate support from the administration who should speak to the person in question and let them know this is a problem. To dismiss someone's concerns because no one else has come forward to make this known, is not what a leader does in a school like ours! What this does is silence others who would like to speak up about their own experiences. Not to act swiftly in such cases, is not only lazy, it gives the entire faculty the impression that respect is not a necessary ingredient of a successful school or working environment.

If you had asked me this question years ago I would have told you it was the most amazing place to work. Unfortunately that is no longer true. In the past few years the school climate at Farmington River has changed for the worse. It went from a place I loved to work to a place that I didn't want to get out of bed and go to. The vibe in the school is depressing! It is the administration against the rest of the staff. There is no leadership, trust or confidentiality. I am not even sure who runs the school anymore. Staff members (Paula & Teresa) need to be set in their place. They

need to be reminded exactly what their jobs are. They are not in charge of anyone! They have been given a power that they should not have. Changes need to be made. And those changes need to be made before the school falls apart anymore than it already has.

In general I enjoy working at FRES and am happy to have the classes and staff that we have. There are a few areas that could use improvement and a major one is the division that is happening between the people in the classrooms and the people who work in the offices. Often people are overstepping their assigned job duties and creating confusion. The things that Tom tells us can often be overturned if someone else finds a problem with it. This can be things like time cards, permission to leave early, office supplies, etc. This leaves the staff feeling frustrated and lied to. This in turn turns the school climate sour and creates hostility between staff, which can turn into snide remarks, gossiping, and raised voices. This would be the area I would like to see progress in at FRES.

DISTRUST & DIVISION

Distrust also exists within the building and has fostered a sense of division amongst faculty and staff. For me the feeling that we are divided can be described concisely with Kentucky's state motto: "united we stand, divided we fall." As time in this climate has passed there has become a seemingly clear message, "them versus us". For me, this split includes a very deep line in the sand between some members of the administrative staff and the rest of the teachers/faculty/staff. This stems from ongoing experiences with distrust as well as overhearing small talk about how teachers/faculty are always complaining, nit picking, bothering them, interrupting, etc.

In my experience, there have been countless times where verbal communication with administrators, either one on one or during staff meetings, may result in hearing one thing (often what we may 'want to hear'), but the follow through actions (or lack thereof) demonstrate the opposite. Additionally, on many occasions people are told different things about the same topic, concern, question, etc. creating a major division and sense of uncertainty (distrust) amongst faculty and staff. As a result, the collaborative nature of our school has diminished leaving behind a seemingly isolated environment in which it feels like we have to walk on eggshells as well as choose who, when, and how we speak. Instead of being able to have professional, honest, and informative conversations that may sometimes be difficult or uncomfortable to promote growth for all (faculty, staff, students, etc.), these opportunities are stifled, dismissed, scoffed at, met with anger, or brushed under the rug facilitating hostility. As a result, mouths and doors are figuratively shut and the collaborative nature is distinguished. Without a collaborative climate in a school,

student achievement will remain stagnant and staff and faculty turnover could increase.

HOSTILE

The consistent experiences with distrust led to the division and isolation of individuals and has fostered the growth of a hostile climate at FRES. I would like to describe the hostile environment as the inability to feel safe and supported when doing, saying, or asking for what is necessary to perform daily functions within the school building or provide effective instruction. This includes but is not limited to asking for supplies, assistance in getting a building door unlocked, filling out necessary paperwork, bringing up challenging but critical topics individually or during staff meetings, etc. Years in the making, the current climate at FRES includes the following bulleted items that I feel have fueled hostility amongst staff:

- Lack of professionalism and minimal expectations that all people in the building be welcoming and respectful by greeting each other as well as using manners (please, thank you, you're welcome)
- Rude behavior that is consistently acknowledged yet tolerated and not addressed in productive ways
- No clear policy and inconsistent follow through regarding unprofessionalism and/or consequences for documented examples of such further fostering the unwelcoming and unsafe climate.
- Strategies to dismiss or minimize people's desire to bring up important concerns in one to one conversations or in staff meetings such as:
 - Saying concerns are not a top priority at the time then seeming to hope it is forgotten about over time
 - Circumventing the issues by discussing other barely/unrelated topics - Putting blame back on the person instead of problem solving and finding solutions - Intimidation utilizing threats to "investigate" in hopes that people will just let things go
- Sarcasm, raising voices, and using unprofessional language/communication skills

Over time, my increasing feelings of disappointment regarding the information shared above (as well as others, too much to be shared here) have gotten the best of me and at times have become so overwhelming and distracting during the school day that I have had to leave the building. Frustrated, I started really reflecting on whether or not my concerns, feelings, and expectations regarding trust, collaboration, and safety were valid or if I was just "complaining", "nit picking", or setting expectations that were too high. To remedy this for myself, I decided to look into what the state regulations are for school environments and professional culture. Upon doing so, I landed on the Massachusetts Department of Education website looking over the administrator's evaluation rubric, where the responsibility for

"school climate" lives. As I began learning more about what is expected and how a school is supposed to function, I began to realize that my concerns (as well as those of my colleagues) were VALID and were certainly not "complaints", nor were they "nit picky". As I continued reading, I realized that I had reasonable expectations that aligned with the state level expectations for school professional culture as well as many other areas on the rubric.

Principal/Superintendent

At times I do feel there is a lack of oversight from administrators on different staff members that seem to have "free reign" to treat others and do as they please that add challenges to the workplace such as not being allowed access to basic office supplies easily or being put in uncomfortable situations when staff members over step their roles and I'm not sure how to proceed. I have also been alarmed multiple times in the past to hear about administrators yelling and speaking to others in a demeaning tone although that has not personally happened to me. My hopes for the future are that administration listens to concerns and follows through appropriately, that school committee more thoroughly monitors what is happening in our building on a regular basis and that any aggressive and disrespectful behaviors are not allowed to continue.

There are vast inconsistencies in the messages we all get when it comes to expectations in our roles. Fortunately, 95% of us work above and beyond what is required showing respect and support to everyone in the building and to the children we teach. All of us, except one, have teaching degrees and have the proper license for our roles, working diligently toward any necessary renewals. All teachers should be licensed and with the proper education. There should be no exceptions to this, as to allow otherwise demeans the professionalism that exists among the majority of us who have worked so hard and lowers the standard of excellence we have announced to our community.

Issues are often met with a request to let things go so they will, "just die down" yet they continue to be repeated.

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, "Demonstrates poor professional judgement, fails to adhere to the school or district code of ethics, and/or does not adequately protect student, family, and/or staff confidentiality." - Unsatisfactory

- Tom says he greets students at the door in the morning but never does. This can be verified by checking the camera recordings of any random day.
- Tom is often on Face Book or doing computer work for his gun class side business. Almost every time people go into his office they see what is on his computer. This is also easily verified by checking his browsing history.
- Has lunch every day with his

granddaughter but no other students in other lunch periods.

- Is rarely seen outside of his office. Was going to classrooms for a period of weeks this year. However, it was always at the same time during the day and that has effectively stopped as of two weeks ago.
- Staff meetings are used for information that could easily be conveyed through email. There is no substance.

From the Principal evaluation rubric, “Leads meetings, the majority of which lack clear purpose and/or are primarily used for one-way informational updates.” - Unsatisfactory

- Tom leaves student discipline largely up to teachers to address. When confronted with a serious offense where in school suspension is warranted, he asks how he should pay for the staffing first.
- Tom does not follow school policies such as the attendance policy.
- Student absences are not followed up on.
- Many students have missed greater than 20 days this year, his granddaughter among them, with little or no follow-up as to why.
- Does not ensure that the nurse calls families when students are absent.
- Tom asks for high standards but does not model them.
- Comes in just prior to student arrival and leaves shortly after.
- Knows that some teachers are ineffective in certain disciplines but fails to address it.

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, “May ask for a commitment to high standards of teaching and learning with high expectations for achievement for all but does not support and/or model it.” – Needs Improvement

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, “Suggests that teams meet to review assessment data in order to adjust practice and identify appropriate interventions, but inconsistently monitors this practice.” – Needs Improvement

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, “May rely on and communicate a few data sources related to student learning when making decisions, but data is insufficient and/or analysis of the data is inaccurate.” – Unsatisfactory

• Requiring block schedules for all based on early MCAS scores that were only bad in one grade.

From the Principal Evaluation Rubric, “Does not reflect on leadership practice or demonstrate new ways of thinking about administration and leadership.” – Unsatisfactory

- Refuses to adequately address Paula’s continued hostile attitude towards all teaching and paraprofessional staff.
- Tom is a poor, ineffective leader
- He continuously ignores even the most basic emails

- During a major moment of crisis, the COVID testing of half the school, Tom is in his office on his computer
- He continuously attempts to isolate individuals by talking to them alone instead of in groups
- I heard someone use the phrase “gaslighting” us
- Time and time again all of us are left angry, let down, and disappointed

All of these have created a climate in the school that is toxic and is driven from the top down. These behaviors are enabled by Tom’s lack of leadership and follow through when issues are reported. People do not speak up because they are afraid of retaliation and understand that speaking up will not result in any changes. Instead, the issue that is brought up is directly relayed to those who are the cause of the issue where it continues to worsen.

The school is an argument for why administrators should be teachers first. It should be a requirement. I understand that it is hard to find subs, but there has to be a better way than constantly pulling paras from their assigned duties. The administration seems to have no idea how disruptive that is for the classroom teachers. But also for all teachers in that if a para is doing pull out IEP services and is being pulled to sub somewhere else, then the services don’t happen. Mainly, there is little leadership from the administration. There is no overall school behavior plan. Yes, there should be a plan for each classroom, but there needs to be an overall school plan that incentivizes students but also has consequences which include seeing the principal after however many warnings. We mainly have a very easy group of kids, but still sometimes consequences need to happen. The one time I had to deal with that, I was undermined when one of the administrators instead was really sweet to the kid who had misbehaved. I was only observed once. Once. The principal is not involved with professional development plans, and if you look at the DESE sight, he is obligated to work on those plans with the teachers, not just approve them. Additionally, it’s not just plans -- but why aren’t we having real professional development provided by the school. The staff meetings are ridiculous as we never talk about anything of consequence -- like how can we better progress monitor students, as an example. I have no idea what the mission or goal of the school is. Years ago, I did my practicum in Berkshire Hills and the goal of successful differentiation in the classroom was very clear. We lack in systems, such as the procedure for lockdown. There is one, but it’s lacking.

The environment in the building needs improvement, and can often be unsatisfactory. There is no expectation set for students behavior from the administration perspective - it is left up to the teachers, and no consistent consequences are being handed out when action is finally taken. Students are sent to the office and often return with no consequence. The behavior continues

because well why wouldn't it?? Greater care can/should be taken to the cleanliness of our building and greater support should be provided regarding students absences and lateness. I don't feel teachers are always supported and are often left to ourselves/others to respond to parents and concerns. Regarding professional culture, tons of improvement can be made. High standards are not modeled, doesn't use our values to guide decision making and leads one way meetings (that can be given via email and a total waste of time).

The principal/superintendent does not attend any IEP or student meetings and has no idea which grade most children in the school are in or even that they are on plans. Numerous parents have contacted me about how the communication in the school is terrible. Dates and events at school are not communicated to them. Perhaps the principal should send out a weekly or monthly newsletter like most other districts do. Communication with staff is equally non-existent. Things aren't communicated till the last minute if at all and most of the time it is only communicated because a staff member brought it to the principal's attention. Monthly staff meetings are often cancelled. The principal has no idea what we do in our classrooms, in fact does not even know most of the curriculum that we use, which honestly is quite sad. Evaluations are not completed in a timely manner and due dates are completed ignored.

*Note: quoted words and phrases came directly from the indicators' in the MA DOE School Level Administrator Rubric.

ENVIRONMENT:

II.A.1. Operational Systems & Routines:

“ensures the campus is clean, attractive, welcoming, and safe.” “Cultivates an environment in which all staff and students take personal responsibility for keeping campus...welcoming, and safe. Regularly assesses the effectiveness and makes adjustments when appropriate.”

This building, though full of wonderful people, is not entirely welcoming nor does it always feel safe. One example includes the consistent negative experiences with the payroll specialist in the front office that have been shared with the principal via discussions and emails. Though he has stated that the issue has been addressed on numerous occasions, nothing has changed and numerous staff continue to either avoid her office completely or when they have to go to her office are often nervous, met with hostility and neglect to greet individuals, rude behavior and remarks about why we are in the office or what we are asking for, and an extremely uncomfortable exchange. Despite a few specific emails to the principal regarding how it impacts us and makes us feel as well as how it damages the school climate, the issue persists. I would also like to note that faculty/staff were emailed earlier in

the year that there are specific days that we are asked not to enter this office because they are too busy and can't be distracted. I feel that this request is incredibly unprofessional, cold, and demeaning. It sends the message that anything we may need is not important. This quickly deteriorates a sense of collaboration and team effort further adding to the dismantling of a positive school climate.

II-D-2. Ethical Behavior:

“demonstrates poor professional judgment, fails to adhere to the school or district code of ethics, and/or does not adequately protect student, family, and/or staff confidentiality.”

Breaches in confidentiality occur often within the administrative offices in our school via excessive gossip, further shredding the feeling of safety within the building and bruising any shred of professional school climate. “Open Door Fridays”, though a really great idea, are not something I would take advantage of with this administration because I do not trust that the communication during that time would be confidential, safe, honest, or beneficial. Rather, I feel that I would be setting myself up for retaliation (depending on the topic brought up) or that I would get an earful of what I “want to hear” and then experience no follow through or, even worse, the conversation would be manipulated or denied completely. This is why emailing, though cold and impersonal, is the form of communication I utilize in this current climate because at least then it is more difficult for topics discussed to be distorted, manipulated, ignored, or refuted.

Professional Culture:

IV-A-1. Commitment to High Standards: “May ask for a commitment to high standards of teaching and learning with high expectations for achievement for all but does not support and/or model it.”

We have heard time and time again to improve our MCAS scores but not much is done in the way of providing consistent support, observing what we are doing well and what needs improvement, or exploring what other schools are doing that we could be doing too. One example includes providing consistent and reliable support staff to the classroom and then pulling them to substitute teach on a regular basis. This may be due to a lack of effort in the searching, hiring, and maintaining a reliable staff of substitutes. The culture certainly impacts individuals' desire to substitute in our building. The consistent disorganization of sub schedules as well as the unwelcoming environment in the human resources office does not help when there is already a national difficulty with finding subs.

Another phrase that has been said time and time again is that the building is full of “great teachers”. Though it certainly is kind to say and I would agree with the statement, I'm not sure where the evidence is coming from to back that claim up.

To me, the phrase is empty because our principal is not regularly visible throughout the school or in classrooms to actually SEE the great work students and staff are doing. For a very brief time, after we brought this concern up, he began popping into our rooms at around the same time every day and either standing close to the door or (rarely) coming all the way into the room and making small talk with staff or students (unrelated to academics). These visits were rarely longer than five minutes and stopped happening after a few weeks. This stifles our growth as a building and facilitates a phony sense of professional culture.

Uninformed decision making also negatively affects the professional culture. When decisions are made without putting effort into going out into the building to explore and learn about something, or without input from valuable individuals in the building, it demonstrates a lack of understanding, interest, effort, and professionalism which hinders the overall success of the school and students.

IV-A-3. "Plans and leads well-run and engaging meetings that have clear purpose, focus on matters of consequence, and engage participants in thoughtful and productive series of conversations and deliberations about important school matters."

Though emails are sent out prior to staff meetings inviting anyone to give suggestions for what should be added to the agenda, it seems that very little effort is made to run productive staff meetings that utilize this precious time effectively. Agendas are often limited and include items that could be addressed in an email rather than taking advantage of an opportunity to have everyone together to engage in conversations or activities to promote our growth and collaboration as a school. Additionally, if an important but uncomfortable or difficult topic is brought up for discussion by faculty/staff, it is met with sarcasm, or a defensive tone which seems to be an attempt to shut it down or intimidate people to not bring up such topics. This negatively impacts the growth of the building as well as the professional culture.

Staff Concerns

I don't believe all the blame is to be put on the administration team, don't get me wrong they had a great deal to do with the lack of the education the students received at the school. The teachers also need to take some of the blame. At Farmington River School there are a few dedicated and hardworking educators, I am including the para's in this evaluation. I could probably list them all on one hand. But, there are also many who aren't. Using the computer to teach a skill or packets upon packets of work that some of the students can't even read, doesn't seem to be working. There is no consistent procedures in many of the grades. No administrator overseeing the everyday classroom routines and learning. I am not sure how to make the school learning environment better, except to have more hands on learning and less computers and packets. More involvement from the administration team overseeing each and every classroom, making everyone accountable for the learning for all children. It makes me sad when I hear from another educator, " I don't know how I am going to have that child in my classroom, it will be an awful school year."

The building is hardly ever cleaned properly, in fact during COVID, most days it was not touched at all during the day. Safety protocols were not followed by the nurse at all during covid, which was brought to the principals attention many times. We have no documented procedures for lock down drills, fire drills, etc. Staff are leaving due to the environment in the building and many children choice out of the district because of the lack of leadership.