

Summary of RVSD-Board Goal Research on Morale and Climate
Presented to Staff August 28, 2024
Pam Gauger and Sara Young (RVSD School Board Members)

Process: Over the summer, we reviewed data from climate surveys and met with several different groups of staff and administration so the school board would have a better understanding of issues that might be affecting morale. The following is a summary of what we observed along with some recommendations and possible action steps. We will also bring this information to the school board for review. This will be a continued process, as we should always be working toward improvement and betterment.

General:

- Through the process, we were reminded of all the challenges – largely outside our control – that our district has been through over the last decade. In light of this, it's not surprising that morale and climate would need some special attention.
- *Every single person* we talked to throughout the process cares deeply about RVSD and has the best intentions for its success. Seriously, every single person. This gives us great faith in everyone's resilience as we work to improve climate and morale.
- This process has been in the spirit of continuous improvement – not to declare anything bad or wrong. To be clear: morale isn't bad across the board, but there are areas that could use some attention.

Areas for attention:

We focused on four areas that were mentioned most frequently in surveys and in our conversations.

Student Behavior:

Summary:

- This is a complicated issue with no easy solution. It looks different at each building but was mentioned at all levels.
- In some cases, more support is needed to handle the variety of behavior situations that arise.
- In some cases, additional education is needed for staff to better understand why certain procedures are chosen for students during behavioral incidents.

Action Steps/Recommendations:

- Elementary climate team has developed a procedure for incidents that will be implemented in the fall and assessed throughout the year.
- Administration is looking into additional training on de-escalation and behavior management so staff better understands what steps are taken during incidents and why. They are also looking into how to review and educate staff on requirements for students with IEPs.
- The school board is open to exploring solutions that may require additional resources to address student behavior.

Communication:

- Internal communication is sometimes ineffective – not always timely and responsive. We observed this on both a macro level (big decisions or initiatives) and micro level (email, etc).
- Before Act 10, union representation was an important source of communication for staff. That is missing now that the union is less active.
- Email overload is an issue.
- In some cases, communication is accessible but staff isn't aware how to access it or it gets lost among the email overload.

Action Steps/Recommendations:

- Could a representative group be formed to be the front line of communication? (this was discussed at the 8/21 meeting and a group of staff volunteered to explore this with administration). If formed, members should be compensated and structure defined.
- Administration will work to streamline email, starting with re-tooling distribution lists to be more specific.
- Administration will work on a comprehensive internal communication plan, and especially concentrate on how to increase in-person communication.

Schedule/Workload/Burnout:

- There is consensus that PLC time is very important and valuable, but schedule limitations hinder effectiveness.
- Cleaning in the buildings has been ineffective since the CMS contract began. This creates an extra burden for staff.
- Substitute shortages creates an extra burden for staff – both when subs are needed and when staff is asked to sub.

Action Steps/Recommendations:

- Renew call for consistent early release to accommodate PLC time. Administration will begin discussions with the school board for possible implementation in the 2025-26 school year.
- Administration and school board (Buildings and Grounds committee) will continue to work with CMS to improve or will explore different options/contractors.

Leadership Engagement:

- In our conversations, leadership engagement was closely related to Communication.
- Some staff indicated a need for more clarity of major processes, such as referendum.

Action Steps/Recommendations:

- Action Steps under Communication and increased PLC time apply in this section.
- Administration will review input and information processes around the referendum, and other major initiatives, to make sure they are inclusive.

FINALLY: A BIG THANK YOU TO THE ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROCESS! WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR CANDOR AND BRAVERY.

#WeAreRiverValley!