

French Gulch-Whiskeytown School (FGWS) was unable to post local indicators to the dashboard by the September 29 deadline through a series of challenges, connectivity issues and miscommunications. It was believed that the site had been registered to input the needed information but it turned out that was not the case. Numerous attempts to correct that on September 29 failed. Phone calls, emails and text messages were attempted over a 5 hour period. While passwords were issued and reissued, phone call “walk through” attempts to gain access to the port to input indicators failed. Some background on the situation. In 2022-23, the school had a shared part time administrator. It was hoped that the outgoing admin and the incoming one would be able to transition the position smoothly for the 2023-24. The outgoing administrator ended up teaching full time for the year in the lower elementary program for the 2022-23 year due to a lack of candidates applying for the position which was open due to a teacher retirement in June 2022. In the meantime, a new office manager came to the site in March 2023 with no previous background in school organization. While the local county office of education has helped bring that individual up to speed in terms of attendance, payroll and other organizational matters, to say the school has been impacted is an understatement. Many of the safety nets that had been in place with the former seasoned office manager were lost in the transition.

A little backfill on FGWS: it is a micro small site with two multi graded classrooms K-8. The school’s first focus is and always has been maintaining continuity in the instructional programs for its students. That is one reason last year that the administrator stepped in to teach the K-3 lower elementary class for what was believed to be a 2-3 week assignment which ended up lasting a year. Everyone at the site wears multiple hats. The office manager is also the kitchen manager so the mid-year transition with new personnel in that position has been interesting. With all of the adult “issues and work arounds” instruction stability for students has been relatively seamless. This year, we again failed to fill the lower elementary instructional position for a lack of applicants. The former teacher who had taught in that position 10 years previously returned to teach 3 days a week. The outgoing administrator is filling in two days a week until a suitable job sharing and/or full time instructor can be found. Again, continuity for students remains a priority. In this shuffle the former and current administrators believed the other had registered online to input the local indicators. The dual roles of the outgoing

administrator and the incoming one have resulted in some gaps in communication.

Onto the local indicators for FGWS. We always keep in mind that the small sample size of our student population does not lend itself to reliable statistical data. Percentages are easily misleading. The school maintained a stable total student enrollment of 19 for most of the year with a high of 21 students for several weeks. The school served 10-11 families. One family represented 20% of the total enrollment. At another point in time 23.8% of the students were categorized as “homeless.” 36.8% lived with grandparents as their primary care givers. It’s almost impossible to give statistical measures while maintaining privacy.

Parent Survey: On February 3, parents were invited to fill out a parent survey that had been included with the weekly school newsletter. Most of the surveys were hand delivered to parents. In the February 10 school newsletter, parents were again encouraged to complete the survey and return it to school. At the February 28 board meeting results were discussed. 33% of our families were represented in the survey. It’s almost impossible to draw clear conclusions from the survey, again because the sample size was so small. While indicating that the staff was responsive to concerns and open to maintaining open and timely communication channels, the belief that the school maintains a positive school climate was mixed. If outlier responses were thrown out most of the responses to prompts ranging from **strongly agree** to **I don’t know** would be in the “agree” category. FGWS has attempted to engage parents more actively. Open house last year featured a family dinner with an opportunity for parents to work in the clay room with their students as mentors to create something out of clay. Creations ranged from mugs to a sugar bowl. This event was well received. We continue to strategize on ways to increase the number of returned surveys.

Student Surveys: Surveys were completed by student in grades 4-8. The most positive aspect of the surveys was that most students felt safe at school. The majority of students indicated that they believe that teachers and staff cared about them. Most felt there was a trusted adult they could go to for help with a school related problem. Concerns regarding the behavior of some peers were expressed in comments. Although those peers were not named, again because of the small size of the student body, no names were needed.

Several SARB letters were sent. Some because of missed days, others due to tardy arrival at school. In this post COVID era, most parents requested Independent study when they knew their children would be out for more than a couple of days.

Staff: The FGWS is uncommonly devoted to the students and the school. They are generous with their time. If there is one overriding “complaint” or continuing concern it is the low rate of pay that is restricted due to overriding constraints of a limited budget. Frustration over acceptable avenues to deal with challenging student behavior has been a concern over the years. A few students can disrupt the learning environment for others. Training in Capturing Kids Hearts, Love and Logic and Fred Jones Tools for Teaching have helped somewhat but hard core behavior issues persist.