

Dear Members of the School Board, Dr. Hamlett and Dr. Trice,

We are reaching out to express serious concerns from CHS faculty, staff, and parents regarding Principal Dr. Helena Thomas and her leadership team. In April the district renewed her contract for four more years despite a stated commitment to data-driven decisions. Our Teacher Working Conditions survey results have dropped to abysmal levels similar to Dr. Thomas's previous school, and our Panorama data shows alarming declines in school climate and morale. We are curious what data supported her contract renewal.

District leadership has been aware of staff concerns since 2023–24 via exit surveys and the Teacher Working Conditions survey results. In November 2024, CHCAE submitted a 15-page document outlining these issues directly to Dr. Hamlett, yet no meaningful action has been taken. We are including a summary report covering that document as well as our recently released Panorama data (see below). These documents and others will be available in full should you request more information via our CHCAE school level reps.

Our administration-written SIP action items require quarterly staff wellness surveys, but admin has denied repeated requests by the SIT to collect and view this data. When admin finally conducted a survey in April, they shared only partial, clearly edited results. They shared only minimal Panorama survey data after the SIT included a board member in a share request. Due to the reluctance to share data and the tampering with said data, our staff has lost trust in this administration.

These challenges have deeply affected our school's culture and climate, contributing to low staff morale, increased turnover, and ultimately limiting our ability to fully support students. As educators, we entered and remain in this profession because of our unwavering commitment to helping children succeed. We need conditions that allow us to do that work effectively.

We need to see action before we leave for summer. We respectfully request a clear and actionable response by Thursday, May 22 from the Board and Doctors Hamlett and Trice that includes an outside party, such as Dispute Settlement Center, who will facilitate restorative conversations between admin and staff and follow up action items for admin. We ask that admin demonstrate understanding and use of collaborative and restorative practices moving forward.

We remain committed to constructive dialogue and collaboration, but continue to be stonewalled by central office and Dr. Thomas when we attempt to communicate in writing or in person. We asked Ms. Manning to read this on our behalf because we have experienced and witnessed harassment and bullying of our colleagues and fear retaliation.

Thank you for your attention and continued service to our schools and community.

Sincerely,
Concerned Carrboro High School Faculty & Staff

Summary of CHS Concerns with Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

This document outlines numerous concerns raised by school staff about their administration. It highlights various problems including violations of legal and policy requirements, particularly regarding student safety reporting and student support laws, alongside issues of poor communication, lack of transparency, and inconsistent administrative practices. The document also emphasizes concerns about staff well-being and morale, citing perceived bullying, lack of respect, and significant staff turnover. Furthermore, it raises critical safety and supervision concerns, including mismanagement of emergency protocols and inappropriate use of security cameras. Overall, the source paints a picture of an administration whose actions are reportedly creating a toxic work environment and potentially jeopardizing the safety and well-being of both staff and students.

Ineffective Leadership & Administrative Practices

Communication Failures: A culture of miscommunication, delayed responses, and lack of transparency has caused confusion during crises (e.g., tornado warnings, bomb threats). Staff feel unsupported during critical events and report a consistent lack of direction from administration, impacting both safety and morale

Fall 2024 Survey via Personal Emails (44 Responses)	
Question	Response Summary
"Do you feel that there is clear, timely, and consistent communication from administration to staff?"	81.8% responded "no"

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none">9/27/24 Tornado warning during virtual staff PD. All three admin were on the call as staff started posting in the chat about needing to shelter in place, gather family members, etc. due to multiple tornado warnings. The four staff presenters encouraged everyone to prioritize their safety in the absence of any direction from admin. When the presenters got warnings and were trying to ensure the safety of their families and unsure how to move forward, no admin unmuted or posted or communicated any direction or messaging addressing people's safety. The presenters were visibly stressed and ended up making the call to postpone, though it was very uncomfortable knowing our admin is very authoritative and not knowing if they would be ok with the decision. There was no admin followup after this incident - no arrangements to finish the training, no acknowledgement of the stress of the situation or the response of the staff involved.2023 Bomb threat. The only communication the entire day from our principal was that we had to evacuate the building. After that, we received ZERO communication. Teachers relied on word of mouth to determine next steps. Many people were scared because there were no official updates from our leadership. We were left on our own to manage the situation, the students, and each other.23-24 Power Outages. The first time there was no communication from the principal to staff about what to do. Everyone was checking their phones to see if we were dismissing early or taking the students outside, if we knew the cause and estimated repair time, etc. We heard NOTHING even after dismissal. All three admin were on campus while we were literally and figuratively in the dark. This issue was never addressed, during or after. The second time we had no communication until the last moment when the power went out during our Thursday exam day. At least 10 staff members

were standing in the commons waiting for some instruction. Are we leaving? Are we delaying? Are you working on it? The principal decided to keep everyone in the courtyard/commons before realizing that there would be much more oversight if students went to their assigned classrooms. An email was sent saying to supervise kids in the courtyard/commons, but no follow up email was sent to say we were “pivoting” to classrooms.

- 23-24 Senior Assembly. The leadership team asked weeks before what the plan was if the assembly were to run over (common occurrence). Questions were ignored, admin did not inform staff what to do should the assembly run over, and a document was never shared with staff to indicate which teachers were in the gym and which teachers were not. When the assembly ran over, staff didn’t know whether to release students, and had no way to check whether they would be releasing their students to a teacher who was in their room or still in the gym. Some dismissed, and some didn’t. In the chaos staff received one message to dismiss and another to hold from the administrative secretaries. Thankfully a veteran teacher sent an all staff email to delegate who should wrangle students out in the halls. There was no follow up from admin to apologize for the confusion nor a recognition of the teachers who took charge of the situation.
 - This year a SWL team member brought up this concern in advance of the senior assembly. There is still a lack of clarity around which classes (“classes with lots of juniors can attend” was stated in a faculty meeting) and teachers will attend.

Micromanagement and Staff Disempowerment: Staff are routinely undermined, with admin ignoring expertise, restricting professional autonomy, and imposing micromanagement. Administrators demonstrate a lack of willingness to collaborate, leading to a disengaged and frustrated staff.

[Fall 2024 Survey via Personal Emails](#) (44 Responses)

Question	Response Summary
“Do you feel like your feedback is taken into account when decisions are made?”	72.7% responded “no”

Qualitative Data

Teachers were informed in a Sunday Jaguar Updates that:

“As I mentioned at the end of last week’s faculty meeting, I believe it’s time to rethink how we approach these meetings, particularly in supporting our collective continuous learning. Starting in November, on the first Wednesday of the month, we will hold faculty meetings for **one hour during every planning period. Then, we’ll gather as a group at 4:10 for announcements and celebrations, wrapping up by 4:30.** This change addresses feedback from our Teacher Working Conditions survey, particularly around the need for more meaningful professional learning and support at CHS.”

- This decision not only takes away precious planning time for teachers, but in effect increases faculty meeting time by from 60 to 80 minutes, as teachers must attend for 60 minutes of their planning, then another 20 minutes after school.
- Shifting faculty meetings into teacher planning time was not stated at the previous faculty meeting.
- This decision was not made with any teacher input, and with very limited staff input at an Instructional Leadership meeting on an *optional* teacher workday when at least 2 of the 8 members were not there. The absent members were the instructional coaches, who work most closely with teachers.
- At SWL/SIT, the principal claimed that this decision was made with plenty of teacher feedback. The

evidence provided:

1. At the SWL optional July workshop, a [meeting schedule](#) was proposed. **Among many other meetings proposed, this schedule showed faculty meetings after school on 1st Wed, and 2nd Wed professional development during planning instead of after school.**

2024 - 2025 Meeting Schedule				
<u>Schoolwide Meetings and Professional Learning</u>				
• 1st Wednesday:	Faculty Meetings			
• 2nd Wednesday:	Planning Period PD instead of after-school PD			
• 3rd Wednesday:	School-Wide Leadership Team Meeting (SWL)			
• 4th Week of Month:	Department Meetings			
	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM (8:10 am - 8:50 am)	Science	Media/Technology	Student Services	
Lunch (12:10 pm - 12:50 pm)	CTE	Social Studies	ELA	
PM (4:05 pm - 4:45 pm)	Healthful Living	Math World Languages Cultural Arts		

2. [Out of 13 respondents, 53.8% \(7\) indicated approval.](#)

- a. SWL teacher members clarified that their survey responses were mainly indicating approval of the dept mtg schedule, which was later changed with no input.
 - b. From the specific survey feedback responses, protecting planning time was mentioned, and flexible options (after school or planning; virtual, etc.) were requested. Multiple comments mentioned only the dept mtg schedule.
- In a separate survey of teachers conducted by teachers (no admin involvement), 89.2% of 37 respondents said they did not support having faculty meetings during planning. 20 emphasized in comments that planning time is already stretched too thin.
 - Our planning periods are already scarce due to IEP/504 meetings, PLT meetings, class coverage, etc.
 - I need my planning period to plan. I wish I could accomplish everything in my planning period so I didn't have to spend hours at home at night and on the weekends (grading, completing forms, contacting parents, setting up IXL, differentiating, etc.), but I really need my planning period to plan, as they were intended.
 - I am doing more and more work at home and it's pushing me to the breaking point. The quality of my teaching has gone down and I'm frustrated and considering quitting.
 - Instructors need to have that time to prepare for students or even to take care of their lives and mental health. It is the only time of the day that that can happen.
 - Rotating leadership team for 2025-2026. The principal drew up a document about changing leadership every two years for dept chairs in an effort to distribute leadership roles more widely. Teachers were asked to nominate new chairs but rather than accepting our nominations, she proceeded to select new leadership based on personal preference, even telling people they were "nominated" or won the voting when no voting actually occurred. Several departments requested co-chairs or for their current chair to bridge with a new person. Instead of soliciting collaborative decision making, she largely refused these requests and went on to disparage the current leadership team calling chairs "negative" and "unprofessional". Not all dept chairs were even replaced which further undermined the messaging that she wanted all new leadership. We were told those areas aren't depts but programs. CTE also is a program but that chair wasn't allowed to stay, despite serving only one year. These concerns about current chairs have never been directly expressed to these individuals. When she reiterated that everyone "voted" or was "nominated" by their dept at the May faculty meeting it took staff by surprise. We have recordings of these conversations. This attempt to sow discord among colleagues is unprofessional and another example of the principal fostering a toxic culture among staff. Also, staff reported being pressured to take on the extra duty contract of department chair even after they declined more than once. We have a paper trail of this as well. We have expressed in SWL meetings that a complete overhaul of the leadership team (everyone finishing their 2 year stint at once) will slow the process of ongoing issues, concerns, and projects. The principal said she was taking those concerns into account and then proceeded to

appoint all new department leads (and in each case the invitation came with a disparaging speech about the previous leader).

Lack of Trust and Mutual Respect:

<u>NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results</u>						
	CHS Before Current Principal		Current Principal Year 1 at CHS		Current Principal in Alamance	
NC TWC Survey Questions	CHS 22-23	CHCCS 22-23	CHS 23-24	CHCCS 23-24	Williams HS 22-23	Alamance County 22-23
“There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.”	Nearly 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed	23% disagreed or strongly disagreed	26% disagreed or strongly disagreed ↑11%	Nearly 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed	Nearly 75% disagreed or strongly disagreed	30% disagreed or strongly disagreed
“Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.”	19% disagreed or strongly disagreed	25% disagreed or strongly disagreed	Nearly 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed ↑19%	Nearly 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed	Nearly 73% disagreed or strongly disagreed	30% disagreed or strongly disagreed
“School leadership creates a culture of trust in the building.”	<i>Question not asked prior to 23-24</i>	<i>Question not asked prior to 23-24</i>	Nearly 60% disagreed or strongly disagreed	27.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed	<i>Question not asked prior to 23-24</i>	<i>Question not asked prior to 23-24</i>

<u>Fall 2024 Survey via Personal Emails (44 Responses)</u>	
Questions	Responses
“The administration creates a culture of trust at CHS”	88.6% either disagreed (31.8%) or strongly disagreed (56.8%)

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our SRO has had access taken away to security cameras, panic button alerts, and sex offender alerts. He has to wait on admin before he learns of any potential safety issues. In a crisis situation, this could lead to tragic outcomes. (Note: This is SOP at other schools as well, so may not be CHS specific) Admin has misused security cameras, including posting a video on social media and sending surveillance images to an employee with inappropriate messages, leading to feelings of being

watched and violated. This behavior has prompted the affected employee to seek employment elsewhere and have made staff very uncomfortable, feeling constantly watched - not for security reasons, but for trying to catch us doing something admin doesn't like.

- Administration have approached certain targeted staff members on multiple occasions after monitoring them on the security cameras. At least one staff member was severely reprimanded for a brief visit to the restroom while another teacher was supervising the class.

Inconsistent Evaluation and Micromanagement of Staff

Flawed Evaluation Practices: Staff report inconsistency and unfairness in summative evaluations, with some evaluations solely based on a handful of observations, ignoring broader evidence of performance. Feedback is overwhelmingly negative and micromanaging, further eroding morale.

Teacher & Staff Panorama Results (Copy of Results in Appendix)				
Question	CHS Teachers	CHCCS Teachers	CHS Staff	CHCCS Staff
Feedback and Coaching: Perceptions of the amount and quality of feedback faculty and staff receive	19%	42%	40%	47%

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my summative evaluation meeting, one administrator refused to change low ratings despite my sending documented evidence weeks earlier. In the meeting, she repeatedly stated it was based only on three observations: two by the interim assistant principal, Dr. Carrol, and the third by a current administrator. I learned from colleagues that administrator has not been consistent in summative evaluation practices. Others were provided a comprehensive summative evaluation, not limited to only their three observations. They were allowed to provide supporting details/events while the evaluation was completed. I emailed the principal outlining my concerns and requesting a meeting. During the meeting, the principal stated the standard practice across the state is that artifacts should be shared for the summative evaluation process. When I stated that mine was only based on the three observations. The principal did not fully address that portion of my concern. She stated that what others said was hearsay and may be based on their perception. I wanted to document that this administrator failed to complete my summative evaluation within the established guidelines. • Every teacher evaluated by one administrator received substantially lower evaluation ratings than they had in the past, even veteran teachers and teachers of the year. • Despite the state evaluation instrument and process allowing for staff to present evidence of standards admin were unable to observe, our current administration does not take any staff-provided evidence into consideration once they have entered evaluation scores. A long time department chair with multiple leadership roles in the school was marked "proficient" (basically a 2 out of 4) in teacher leadership, despite significant evidence to the contrary. • One administrator gave one of my fellow teachers a low evaluation grade because one administrator was never able to come to evaluate the teacher. I was present in one of the scheduled observations and the administrator did not show up for the third. That is unacceptable work ethic from anyone in a leadership role.

Inadequate Leadership in Staff Development: Administrative expectations for goal-setting and professional development are often unclear and inconsistent, with staff required to follow conflicting instructions and excessive scrutiny, leading to unnecessary stress and confusion.

Teacher & Staff Panorama Results (Copy of Results in Appendix)				
Question	CHS Teachers	CHCCS Teachers	CHS Staff	CHCCS Staff
Professional Learning: Perceptions of the amount and quality of professional growth and learning opportunities available to faculty and staff	35%	47%	41%	52%

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were told to put their PDP goals in both NCEES and a Google Doc with specific instructions by August 23, 2024. • Then in late Sept, slides shared via dept meetings gave different instructions, and many staff were directed to change their PDP goals to meet the new standards. Most staff had already submitted in NCEES, but were told to change their goals in their Google Doc. • Staff at other high schools have not experienced this level of scrutiny, micromanagement, and extended work on their PDP goals - they entered theirs in Aug/Sept and were done. • The practice of requiring extensive Google Form feedback in addition to posting in NCEES has continued through MOY and EOY. • It is common practice for admin to show up for observations that should be announced with no announcement and, at times, in inappropriate contexts (1:1 meetings with students, etc.). When asked, they say there was no other time or activity scheduled by the employee. However, the employees' calendars weren't shared and they were never asked to suggest times or activities for observation.

Erosion of Trust with Parents and Community

Failure to Engage Parents Effectively: Poor parent engagement is evident, with a significant decline in participation at school events and a lack of administrative acknowledgment of PTSA efforts. Communication with families, especially in critical meetings like IEP and 504 plans, is often rude, condescending, and dismissive.

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23-24 ML parent night was poorly attended, with only one family present, showing a new disconnect between admin and ML families. • During an attendance team meeting, the team was discussing ways to increase MLL student's attendance. During this conversation, multiple staff members brought up concerns about the plan related to cultural differences. The administrator ignored all of these comments and seemed to just want to check a box, without actually caring about the turnout of the event

Dissolution of Parent Involvement: Administrative failure to engage with and support PTSA led to the collapse of its board and loss of access to essential funds. Staff's attempts to recruit a new PTSA were ignored, further alienating the school's relationship with its community.

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PTSA parents have observed and communicated to staff a lack of interaction and acknowledgment from the administration. Despite the PTSA organizing various events for teachers and staff, the administration has not shown appreciation, and the administrator has been outright rude to parent volunteers. We started the 24-25 school year with no PTSA - no board, no access to funds - because the previous members were unwilling to continue working with admin. Despite numerous requests to admin (texts, email, pre-written "blurbs" to include in messaging) to communicate with parents and recruit a new board to be ready for the school year, nothing was done.

Safety & Student Support Concerns

Inadequate Protocols & Unsafe Practices: Misunderstanding and mishandling of safety protocols, including Behavior Threat Assessments (BTAs), have raised significant concerns regarding student and staff safety. Administrators have ignored guidelines, failed to act during crises, and left staff uncertain about roles and responsibilities during emergencies.

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requiring student services to consult admin BEFORE making a CPS report. Notification before is not sufficient. This also does not align with school board policy around CPS reporting. It came out later that the administration made this rule because they assumed, without ever clarifying, that a report was made without substantial suspicion of abuse, which was incorrect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On multiple occasions, staff members have stated that a student's situation falls under Child Find and administration has disrespectfully disagreed and shut it down. There seems to be an assumption that a student has to go through MTSS before we enact Child Find. This is a huge legal concern and also impacts students receiving the supports they may need.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal seems to have a severe lack of understanding around district and school level safety protocols. This includes a complete misunderstanding of Behavior Threat Assessment protocols and claiming that there is a school-wide DART team. However, the DART team is a district level team that includes people throughout the district. She states that we have a school level DART team, but then isn't able to specify who is on that team. This is a huge safety concern. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's especially concerning about her lack of understanding related to Behavior Threat Assessments is that it is Admin initiated and led. This has resulted in incomplete behavior threat assessments(BTAs) and BTAs never being started that should have been - a huge safety concern.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the statewide rollout of the Protect Our Students initiative, the principal stated to several staff members that Student Services was fully trained and had been asked to lead the initiative when no one in Student Services had even been even notified of this rollout. When teachers asked Student Services questions about the rollout, staff had to scramble to create a presentation and process

- As evidenced over and over again, when the principal does not have an answer, she will make something up or pass the buck rather than admit she does not know and collaborate on a solution

Inconsistent Discipline & Disrespectful Treatment: Student discipline and support are handled inconsistently, with reports of admins dismissing concerns and making light of serious situations (e.g., laughing about a student returning from treatment). Admin also failed to relay safety information between staff after incidents, causing harm to students.

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin has shown a pattern of inequitable treatment towards multilingual (ML) students, particularly targeting Hispanic students for disciplinary actions. Multiple students have reported feeling disliked/targeted by admin. EX: An incident involving two ML students being placed in in-school suspension (ISS) for wandering the halls, while many other students engaging in similar behavior were not punished, raised concerns of racial bias.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On multiple occasions, admin has denied student reports of bullying after students brought behavior to their attention, even when in some cases parents have communicated concerns as well. Often students are told they haven't demonstrated that behavior is a pattern and, therefore, bullying is not occurring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff have repeatedly drawn attention to cases of bullying (even Title IX cases based on race/sex/ethnicity/orientation*) and the administration dismisses them or says they have "told the other students to stop" without actual consequences or safety protocols for students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female students have reported to teachers, who reported to admin, that a boy or boys are getting into the ceiling, removing tiles in the girls' bathrooms and watching them in the bathroom stalls - possibly filming on phones. On the first four times staff brought this up with admin, including ideas to prevent/stop the behavior, admin simply told teachers to monitor the bathrooms when they bring their students during class breaks. This has created a seriously unsafe environment for our students. Many girls report not feeling safe using school restrooms. As of December 2024, the principal reported to the Schoolwide Leadership Team that the school is waiting on the facilities department to address the issue. In the meantime, she referenced a vague plan for monitoring the entryways into the ceiling. No mention of who is monitoring, when, or where. Teachers were told there was nothing they could do when they asked if they could assist.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *In Dec a variety of issues at CHS, including 3 Title IX concerns, were reported directly to HR. There was never any follow up from anyone at Lincoln Center.

Impact

Fall 2024 Survey via Personal Emails (44 Responses)	
Question	Response Summary
"On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your job satisfaction this year?"	61.4% responded with either a 1 (34.1%) or 2 (27.3%)

“Has your job satisfaction led you to consider leaving CHS?”	52.7% of staff responded with either “yes - I occasionally think about leaving the school” (50%) or “yes - I am strongly considering leaving the school” (22.7%)
“How have the changes initiated by our current administration impacted your ability to fulfill your job duties?”	61.4% of staff responded “my ability to fulfill my job duties has lessened”
“Under the current administration, I am...”	65.9% of staff responded “less able to serve students than I have in the past”

Teacher & Staff Panorama Results (Copy of Results in Appendix)				
Questions	CHS Teachers	CHCCS Teachers	CHS Staff	CHCCS Staff
School Climate: Perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school	41%	58%	51%	66%
Staff-Leadership Relationships: Perceptions of faculty and staff relationships with school leaders	27%	69%	42%	76%
Well-Being: Faculty and staff perceptions of their own professional well-being	49%	57%	61%	64%

Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have lost at least fourteen valued staff members directly because of disrespectful and unprofessional interactions with administrators and lack of restorative actions. Associate Principal Security (2) Mental Health Specialist Nurse Classroom Teacher (4) Admin assistant (2) Receptionist Interventionist Lead Counselor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During a meeting with administration, I got a heart rate notification on my watch. It stated “your heart rate rose above 120 BPM while you seemed to be inactive for 10 minutes starting at 10:10AM” indicating the physical health impacts of the way this administration impacts their staff members

Appendix

NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey Results						
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Teacher Panorama Results



Carrboro High
"Spring 2025 Staff Survey 2025 Version of Teacher/Staff Survey, 1. Teacher"



Summary

Topic Description	Results	Comparison
Belonging How much faculty and staff feel that they are valued members of the school community.	74%	65% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools
Feedback and Coaching Perceptions of the amount and quality of feedback faculty and staff receive.	19%	42% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools
Professional Learning Perceptions of the amount and quality of professional growth and learning opportunities available to faculty and staff.	35%	47% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools
School Climate Perceptions of the overall social and learning climate of the school.	41%	58% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools
Staff-Leadership Relationships Perceptions of faculty and staff relationships with school leaders.	27%	69% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools
Well-being Faculty and staff perceptions of their own professional well-being.	49%	57% Chapel Hill - Carrboro City Schools

62 responses

“Our School, Our Students”

Staff Panorama Results

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“Our School, Our Students”