

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

ELEMENTARY

Binion

1. Is there a way that Birdville can be more competitive and raise the summer school rate for teachers to \$30 an hour?

- A. In order to increase the summer school rate for teachers and other staff, it would be necessary to increase the cost of courses for students. That can certainly be a consideration for future summer sessions, but we know that many students are unable to participate because they cannot afford the current \$150 per course cost. Even more would be prohibited from recovering or accelerating credit if an increase was implemented.

Most districts have reduced or eliminated summer school offerings the past several years because of the budgetary impact. Other than required STAAR/EOC remediation, very few courses are offered for students. Everyone is competing for online course enrollments now which are paid based on number of students assigned to a teacher-of-record. Birdville pays \$75 for each student assigned to an online teacher. With the shift to a more 24/7 model, several changes will be made in the next couple of years, including compensation of staff. This suggestion will be taken to the Summer School Planning Committee when it begins its work on Summer School 2016.

2. Is Birdville going to allow all four-year-olds to attend PK-3 and PK-4 regardless of military status, race or family income like the new initiative in Fort Worth ISD?

- A. We will be following the current enrollment criteria for pre-K 3 and pre-K 4.

Birdville

3. Presently field trips are blocked for K-2nd grades during testing dates in April. These were dates we really found best and needed to be off campus. Could that be revisited for next year?

- A. The blocked days are from the UIL competitions at the secondary level. It takes the fleet to meet the needs of the Fine Arts Department during competition time.

4. Why do the elementary schools not participate in UIL competition? Such as writing, oral presentations, music memory, etc.

- A. The elementary principals will discuss this topic at our April principal meeting to see what options are available.

Cheney

5. Will educational assistants be getting raises since the minimum wages were increased to around \$9?

- A. Just because the minimum wage goes up, it doesn't impact the budget. The Board has approved raises districtwide the past couple of years. Administration is working on the 2015–16 budget. At this time, the Board has not made any decisions on salaries.

6. Can the flex day be moved from January 18, 2016 to March 28, 2016? That March day is after Easter, so that would allow for family time for teachers for the Easter weekend.

- A. The Calendar Committee recommended January 18 being a flex day. This will be considered for the 2016–17 calendar.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Green Valley

7. We understand that CARE Team, 504, and RTI meetings are important, but they have taken a precedence over everything else for the school counselor. As a result, our counselor does not have time to meet with our scholars as a group or individually for help or guidance when needed. She is overwhelmed with paperwork. Looking to the future, **is there a way or plan to help the counselors so they can have time to see the scholars when they need to be seen and the counselor is not so tied up with paperwork?**
 - A. This is a topic that has provoked many conversations among district administrators, campus administrators, and counselors. We are aware of the many job responsibilities the counselors have been assigned. Federal and state mandates surrounding Section 504 and the Language Proficiency Assessment Committees continue to grow, but districts do not receive funding to develop support systems to meet these demands. We are exploring options that would provide counselors support in some areas, relieving them of some of the duties that take them away from working with students.

Holiday Heights

8. **Will the District reconsider the time allocated for math instruction in grades 3–5?** It is very challenging to teach at a high level of rigor and relevance in 60 minutes. Also, the change in TEKS has made it even more difficult to keep up with the pacing. I understand there are only so many hours in an instructional day, but it would be beneficial to revisit this topic again.
 - A. Time allotment is always challenging, and it is something that is certainly under consideration each year. The C & I Department is looking at options to present to principals for feedback. They will work with Dr. Ownby to determine the final recommended time allotments for 2015–16, and we can assure you that math instructional minutes will be included in that discussion. Teachers are encouraged to share this concern, along with suggested options, with their principals so that they will be prepared to discuss time allotments when they meet with Dr. Ownby.

Mullendore

9. Between MOY testing, semester tests, preparing for STAAR, and TELPAS, teachers find themselves struggling to meet all the requirements and deadlines. We realize STAAR and TELPAS timelines are mandated by the state, however **would it be possible for our district to realign our testing schedule around these state tests?** Is it possible for ISIP assessments to be moved to the end of each month? We have found that when students are given a whole month they have more opportunities for learning, therefore, are able to perform better and meet their individual goals. We have especially found this to be true in the second semester, after the students are returning from long breaks.
 - A. We are currently developing the local assessment calendar for 2015–16 and will take these comments into consideration. In addition to the state testing program, we are required to screen students three times during the year in reading and mathematics as part of RtI. The ISIP assessment is automatically administered the first time in the month that a student logs into the Istation system. This quirk of the Istation system is why we have placed ISIP testing in the first portion of the BOY, MOY, and EOY windows and placed STAAR math in the second half of the windows. While it could be done, moving the ISIP window to the last part of the month would mean that students are assessed twice during the same month (assuming that they logged into Istation early in the month). The EOY screening window, which has traditionally been in May, may be revised next year as the state has moved the STAAR 3–8 assessments to the second week in May 2016.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Mullendore

10. Will teachers ever be given the authority to write the CBAs?

- A. No. These are District curriculum board assessments. Campuses have the freedom to write common formative assessments. The CBAs are District assessments and their development is under the purview of the District content coordinators. As part of the development process, content coordinators may solicit the assistance of teachers to help develop and review items. Teachers interested in contributing to the development of CBAs should contact the appropriate content coordinator.

Smithfield

11. What if there was a way to start school at noon on the snow days, rather than be off the whole day?

It could be a special waiver that on snow days, we go 12-4. That would have worked last Tuesday. It is different and the attendance time is 10 a.m. but maybe they could change it or apply for a waiver.

- A. In order to count the day with TEA, we have to be in class for at least four hours of instruction. This is also an issue with extracurricular activities and the capacity of transportation. We do not have the ability to run buses to facilitate a common start/end time. This would mean: 12-4 for high schools; 12:40-4:40 for elementary; and 1-5 for middle schools.

12. Is there a way to rollout the mini iPad initiative more efficiently so that more people can use them more quickly? Maybe train one campus together at a time? Use a webinar? Many of us have i-devices and are familiar with them which will help in training larger groups of us.

- A. There are multiple reasons to use the distribution model we have in place. They include:
- Procurement constraints that limit the number of iPads we can purchase at once. iPad Minis are part of a larger distribution beyond teacher devices. We are purchasing them for several other uses.
 - Lack of staff to configure more of the devices and user accounts. These devices do not work out of the box due to the Airwatch software that is added to the iPad to manage it.
 - Lack of staffing to train teachers. Our experience with our first few classes confirmed to us that almost all users need some form of training, either for Apple ID or for Airwatch management configuration. By having the training at the labs in the Technology Department, our Digital Learning Specialists are more productive.
 - We desire that all schools receive some of their new technology now. If we distribute the iPad Mini school-by-school in waves, we would distribute them only as we refresh the technology at each of the campuses. This means some teachers would not see their iPad Mini for two to three years.

As we execute upgrades at each campus during an installation wave, we will assure that all teachers at that campus have their iPad Mini and are appropriately trained. Wave 1 installations includes nine elementary schools and should be complete by October. The Digital Learning Team will also be providing Project Innovate iPad trainings over the summer to accelerate the pace of iPad Mini distribution.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Academy at C.F. Thomas

13. Is there anything the District can put in place at each elementary campus to help classroom teachers function each day when they have severe behavior problems in their classrooms? I'm not talking about normal behavior problems that can be resolved with good classroom management practices. I'm talking about behavior that particular students cannot seem to control (total melt-downs, kicking furniture and teachers, throwing things, screaming fits, being physical with other students, total inability to stay in their place, spitting on other students, running out of the classroom, cursing, constant spinning around and contorting the body). Dealing with this kind of behavior on a daily basis takes up so much of the teacher's time that it has a tremendous adverse effect on the learning and emotional stability of the other students in the classroom. In the early elementary grades, teachers spend an inordinate amount of time and effort to get special help for these students, but the process usually takes the entire year. In the meantime, the other students are suffering.

- A. This has been an on-going discussion with the elementary principals. We have different supports that are unique to the situations. This will be reviewed and options outlined in our next meeting in April. The best solution is to communicate with your principal and assistant principal to decide what options are available and what support is needed. We will continue to brainstorm possible solutions in the best interest of all of the students.

14. Is there any way when a substitute teacher accepts or confirms a teaching assignment and then cancels the job, that the substitute could be required to fill that assignment? This question is derived from the many problems that are caused from having substitutes cancel assignments at the last minute. Problems such as when the school secretary is scrambling to fill a teaching assignment or various assignments, especially when more than 10 teachers are out for training that day. As teachers, we are required to obtain and confirm a substitute whenever we need to be out for training or personal leave. In fact, sometimes we do not attend the scheduled training or have to cancel doctors' appointments and personal leave days because of last minute cancellations. Why aren't these rules applied to substitutes as well? For example, if a substitute needs to cancel a job after they have confirmed the assignment, then they would need to refill that assignment. This way, the assignment will be covered, and the school secretary does not have to try and refill it at 8:00 in the morning. This is just one suggestion to try and eliminate the many problems that arise from substitute cancellations.

- A. HR monitors how often subs cancel at the last minute. An inordinate amount of cancellations by a sub will result in an assessment of their employment status with the District.

West Birdville

15. Are there any future plans for a systematic/districtwide initiative to begin a recycling program in the schools?

- A. The District already has in-place a systematic cardboard recycling program. Each campus has a dumpster dedicated to cardboard only. There are also some campus-driven newspaper recycling programs around the District that are supplied for the community and campus to use. The Buildings and Grounds Department is exploring recycling opportunities with the local waste management companies and will report their findings to the District's administration for consideration.

The waste management companies that serve the district provide a "single stream" service, meaning recyclables such as paper goods, plastic containers, aluminum and steel cans can be collected together in the same container at each campus. There are existing cardboard collection dumpsters at each campus that can be utilized for single stream recycling, so we wouldn't have to add a dumpster at the schools. We are working closely with the companies to determine feasibility of the program at this time.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

- 16. Is there a District protocol that could be set up for GT students being clustered in one classroom per grade level based on the amount of GT students in a said grade level?** Having a group of students that have been in the same classroom for several grades creates an uneasy classroom environment no matter how much of a community is created in the classroom.
- A. BISD does have a protocol to cluster identified G/T students. According to TEA mandates, The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students, and BISD Board Policy EHBB (Legal), identified G/T students must be provided opportunities to work together, work with other students, and to work independently during the school day, as well as the entire school year. To meet these requirements, Birdville Gifted and Talented students, grades 1–5, are served in cluster groups of at least five students with a designated classroom G/T teacher and are provided pull-out services by the campus G/T Interventionist. For a campus with a small number of identified students in a grade level, the G/T students are clustered in groups of five as the numbers allow. However, the G/T students are not divided among the classrooms so only one G/T student is in each class. A campus with a grade level having five or less identified G/T students must cluster the students in one classroom each year until additional students are identified. Once a grade level identifies six or more students, the ways to cluster them in subsequent years can vary. For a campus with a large number of identified students in a grade level, the G/T students are divided among the classrooms in cluster groups of five or more. G/T students are not clustered altogether in one classroom. Ensuring that classes are balanced so that learning is maximized can be a challenging task. The Curriculum and Instruction staff would be available to work with any campus on strategies for clustering identified G/T students.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Haltom Middle

- 17. How do we, as a District, justify not having working fire alarms in the portable buildings when they are wired for them?**

- A. Those particular buildings have been at the campus for many years and the system approved at that time was to use the existing 110-volt smoke detectors in each classroom with audible horns on the exterior of the building for the fire alarm system. After consulting with the fire department recently regarding the situation, they advised that additional exterior horns should be installed pending the replacement of the fire alarm system scheduled summer 2015 for the main building and portable buildings. Buildings and Grounds certified fire alarm technicians will add the horns recommended by the fire department.

North Richland Middle

- 18. To support our AP teachers, what can we do to begin sending our pre-AP teachers back to the AP Academy?** Teachers in the past have received numerous resources and suggestions to support the pre-AP and AP classrooms.

- A. We are hopeful that money will be available in the new budget to begin the implementation of a three-year cycle for Pre-AP teachers to attend APSI. We believe this training is essential to building a stronger advanced program and are committed to making it happen. In addition, we plan to offer professional learning to support advanced academic strategy use in all Pre-AP/AP classrooms.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
April 13, 2015

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

North Richland Middle (*continued*)

- 19. Is there any way that our high schools will become IB schools? If not, why?**

<http://schoolctr.hebisd.edu/education/staff/staff.php?sectiondetailid=61276&>

- A. No. We have investigated and the expense far outweighs our financial capabilities at this time.

North Ridge Middle

- 20. Technology allows staff to stay in contact with parents in ways like never before. However, there is nothing like face-to-face interaction. What is the potential of having ½ days for parent conferences similar to some surrounding districts?**

- A. The half days added to the 2015–16 calendar are new and were added for PLC time. The Calendar Committee can look into the feasibility of adding half days for parent conferences on the 2016-17 calendar.

Watauga Middle

- 21. Is there a way that the answers for the CBAs can be kept confidential until ALL district tests have been scored?** It is very simple to scan one test and then have the answers before giving the CBA to the students. This is not an accusation of any wrong-doing, just something that has been observed. Perhaps after the scan window is closed, the Coordinators could email out the answers to the perspective departments for us to go over the answers with the students.

- A. The District encourages ethical and appropriate behavior for all staff. The procedures for CBAs are designed to help maintain the confidentiality of the assessment to deter inappropriate use of test content prior to administration; however, the system will never be as strictly regimented as the state assessment program, nor should it be. Therefore, there are instances where teachers may find ways to circumvent the system to inappropriately prepare students for CBAs. Such behavior is unethical, undermines the validity of any data generated by the tests, and is costly in terms of wasted resources and lost time for central office and campus staff, and lost learning time for students. As a professional educator, it is a teacher's responsibility to act ethically, and to report any staff member acting in an unethical manner to campus administration.

It is uncertain as to what would motivate teachers to use questionable practices such as scanning one test to get the answers, explicit use of CBA test items to review students prior to testing, or other strategies to attempt to gain higher scores on these assessments. The CBAs are intended to inform instruction, provide feedback to students and teachers about student learning, and to serve as a calibration for the development of common campus assessments. The District has never assumed a punitive stance in regard to low CBA scores at the classroom, teacher, or campus level and the District has never advocated that CBAs be used to grade students. Instead, the District makes the positive assumption that teachers understand the value of assessment data from tests designed at the level of rigor of STAAR, make effective use of the data to evaluate teaching and learning within collaborative PLCs, and do what they know is the right thing to do.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Watauga Middle (*continued*)

- 22. If our district really wants to have common assessments why don't we have them written by teachers or staff members and sent out to the schools?** Writing common assessments is ... time consuming, difficult, and never seems to measure up to the standards set by our campus academic coach. Teachers would still put them into AWARE; still decide what day to give the test; still decide how to teach the material; still decide how to review for the test; teachers would still run off all of the tests and bubble sheets. Due to the emphasis on increasing the rigor of our tests it would seem wise to put writing the tests into the hands of people who are best trained for that ... master teachers, academic coaches, and subject consultants. As a teacher, taking the burden of writing tests off of my list would increase my time to create and implement more engaging lessons. It also puts all students on a level playing field in regards to what is being taught and tested in our district and will hopefully better prepare them for district benchmarks and state tests. At the very least this could be piloted at one middle school and one high school campus to gather data to see if it is worth further consideration.
- A. The development of common assessments is the work of the PLC as part of the planning for learning process. Using a backward-design model to first decide how students will demonstrate mastery of standards prior to the design of learning tasks has been demonstrated to be an effective process to improve student learning that is aligned to the standards. Secondary teachers in the core content areas have time set aside for PLCs each day in which to deconstruct standards, design both formative and summative assessments, develop aligned lessons, analyze data generated through common assessments, and reflect on the efficacy of the campus learning system. The PLC best knows the content to be assessed, the order in which it is presented, and is best situated to take into account the specific learning needs of students. District-developed common assessments cannot be as flexibly designed as those developed by the campus. There may be a misconception that common assessments need to be in a selected response (i.e., multiple-choice) format, similar to STAAR or CBAs. However, common assessments can be in any format, including free response or even performance-based. Such alternatives may provide a wealth of information about student learning gaps and misconceptions that is not possible with a multiple-choice format.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Birdville

- 23. What is the District plan for the Algebra 2 STAAR test next year?** We have heard rumors that all students taking Algebra 2 will take the test, even though the state has said it's optional for the District to decide. How does the District plan to communicate this new test to parents and students who have been told that the Algebra 1 STAAR was the only math test needed to graduate? How will this test affect accountability ratings? How does this test affect graduation? If we are requiring all students to take the Algebra 2 STAAR test, why? Why is BISD opting to add another STAAR test that's not required?
- A. At this point in time, the District has not made a decision as to whether or not we will administer the Algebra II and English III EOCs in spring 2016. The state will make the assessments available to districts, but it is an all-or-none decision: either districts test all eligible students or they test none. As amended by HB5, Section 39.0238 of the Texas Education Code stipulates that these two assessments will not be used as a requirement for graduation, nor can they be used by institutions of higher education for admission purposes. While it may be tempting to administer these assessments to help inform us about the perceived college readiness of our students, at this time, there has been no indication from TEA as to how the results may be used for district and campus accountability, or for student attainment of TSI requirements. Therefore, the District will postpone this decision until more information is available about the use of results from these assessments.

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

April 13, 2015

HIGH SCHOOLS (Continued)

Richland

- 24. Will we be speeding up the roll out of the iPads?** The trainings fill up so quickly and several of us haven't been able to get registered for one yet.
- A. The Digital Learning Team will offer several classes during the summer to accelerate iPad Mini distribution. In the fall, the Digital Learning Specialists will be splitting their time between campus trainings at the end of campus technology refreshes and Project Innovate classes at the Technology Department. I recommend as many teachers as possible sign up for summer classes.
- 25. Students are being inundated with district- and state-mandated testing. In the fourth six weeks, ELA students were required to take three district-mandated benchmarks. However, we are not allowed to take these as test grades. So that means we have to have three other major grades for our students. This is an unwarranted burden on teachers and students alike. Is there anything that can be done to mitigate these situations?**
- A. The assessment council is currently accepting comments on the 2015–16 assessment calendar and will take this concern into consideration. It has been recognized that the open-ended response (OER) assessments that were added to the current calendar did present challenges in marking periods where other testing was taking place, and will be considered in the discussion.