

**Superintendent's Communications Council**  
**Campus Questions**  
**April 17, 2017**

**ELEMENTARY**

**ACFT**

- 1. Is there a way to adjust the day of the month we get paid to alleviate the hardship of having six weeks between getting paid before Christmas and the end of January?** For instance, Dallas ISD pays their teachers on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

**A.** Our Payroll department contacted the payroll manager at Dallas ISD. They started paying administration and campus employees on the 15th of each month approximately ten years ago. Dallas ISD requires one week to generate the biweekly payroll because their subs and auxiliary employees are only paid based on the hours worked that pay period, rather than annualized. The annualized system does not allow us to move the pay date due to the time required to process payroll. We annualize pay to ensure that our employees who do not work in the summer are able to cover their insurance payments during the months they are not working. Annualized pay for biweekly staff requires more time to process than paid as earned.

We could pay December payroll on the normal pay date of the 25th, so the January check would be the normal month in between pay dates. However, we believe an early check in December helps our employees with expenses they incur around the holidays.

- 2. We are creating campaigns to attract families to our schools. What is our district doing to attract and keep highly qualified teachers?** In a recent "Comparison of Teacher Salaries in the Western Metroplex" (UEA), Birdville is number 9 in beginning salaries, number 9 for year 10, number 14 for year 20, and number 25 for year 30. One of the things one consistently hears parents say is they want their child to have an experienced teacher. Yet salaries go down for teachers with experience to where at year 30 our teachers are making over \$9,000 less than their counterparts in HEB.

*A similar question was answered in December 2014 (see Q & A below):*

- Q. Is the pay in this district ever going to include step raises again?** Teachers in the HEB school district make over \$100,000 more than teachers in BISD upon retirement. How would this attract bright, innovated teachers when they do the math – after working 20+ years teachers in BISD only get a \$12,000 raise – seems like the pay scale is front loaded.

**A.** BISD's Board of Trustees supports a teacher salary schedule that is very competitive with the districts in our area comparison group. Those districts include HEB, Keller, Grapevine-Colleyville, Carroll, and Eagle Mountain-Saginaw. Each year, we compare BISD salaries at 0, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of service to those of the area districts and adjust salaries so that they remain competitive. Our salary schedule consistently ranks among the top in our area, and as a result, the District does attract the best teachers as evidenced by rising student achievement. The chart below addresses the 2014–15 teacher salaries for the area districts mentioned, and you can see that BISD fares very well in comparison.

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Regarding a \$12,000 difference between Step 0 and Step 20 on the 2014–15 hiring schedule, that is accurate and is the case in other school districts as you can see from the chart below. However, this is a hiring pay scale, not a predictor of future salaries. For example:

A beginning teacher with a bachelor’s degree in 1994–95 had a starting salary of \$24,596, and if hired the same year (1994–95) at step 20 the salary was \$36,000, a difference of about \$11,400. However, if hired in 1994–95 at \$24,596, our step 20 pay if hired 20 years later in 2014–15 is \$56,130, which is a difference of about \$31,500. I suppose one could argue from both sides, but one argument is that the first-year teacher has the same responsibilities, but yet makes about \$12,000 less than the teacher with 20 years of experience. Regardless, the chart shows that area districts have a similar approach to teacher pay regarding years of experience.

Surrounding Districts Teacher Salary Comparison

<b>Years</b>	<b>Birdville</b>	Keller	Hurst- Eules- Bedford	Eagle Mtn Saginaw	Carroll	Grapevine- Colleyville	<b>Average</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	\$50,000	\$52,750	\$47,080	\$48,200	\$50,000	<b>\$49,671</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$51,830</b>	\$51,849	\$52,803	\$49,241	\$49,553	\$51,000	<b>\$51,046</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>\$53,280</b>	\$54,519	\$54,364	\$51,699	\$51,495	\$52,000	<b>\$52,892</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>\$54,680</b>	\$56,019	\$55,748	\$53,608	\$53,217	\$53,000	<b>\$54,378</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>\$56,130</b>	\$58,069	\$57,808	\$56,501	\$54,939	\$54,000	<b>\$56,241</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>\$62,000</b>	\$61,294	\$63,161	\$61,497	\$58,672	\$58,145	<b>\$60,794</b>

**Binion**

**3. Will employees be able to use open enrollment for STEMS and specialty schools or will they have to go thru the lottery system?**

- A.** All students who want to apply for a School with a Specialization must go through the lottery process. To assist current students and employees, we have established eligibility exceptions for students to be accepted (in the following order of priority) based on whether they: (1) are current students (these students are already counted in the projected number of students for

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**ELEMENTARY (cont'd)**

**Binion (#3 cont'd)**

that campus); (2) are the children of employees; or (3) have an older sibling currently enrolled at the campus. By utilizing this system, students meeting any of the exception criteria are given a higher priority than students who do not meet any of these criteria.

**Francisco**

4. The district values teacher professional development to the extent of building a new building for professional development. Interventionists need to have time to collaborate with one another. This would allow the interventionists to better serve the needs of our students. **Can the interventionists have more professional development days which allow collaboration to address specific concerns for meeting the needs of our tiered students?**

A. Currently interventionists receive professional learning on various days during the year. Since the role of the interventionist is to serve students, pulling them off campus for additional professional learning days would mean less direct service for students. However, if a need arises for additional professional development, then a proposal could be submitted to Debbie Kneegs and Jaimie Smith for consideration.

**North Ridge**

5. **Has BISD ever thought about having a paid pool of subs?** They would be BISD employees and their only job is to go to whatever schools need them that day. This would be for teachers and paras.

A. Yes, we have considered the concept of permanent subs. We are always exploring avenues for better results. Several school districts have tried it with varying results, but for the most part, still struggle with fill rates.

There are actually some legal barriers to strategically overcome, both state and federal, because these "subs" are then technically regular employees and are due certain benefits including personal days. Not that the District is opposed to rewarding benefits, but the budgetary impact would be greatly increased.

Subs can actually work every day in BISD due to our absence rate. Most qualified subs do work regularly; they are highly sought after. Our system, AESOP, is set up to encourage campuses to use familiar subs often. Each employee should designate five favorite subs in their profile and the campus should also designate favorite subs. These favorites are automatically contacted when an absence is submitted. Also, employees should change their profiles to reflect their true assignments (i.e., fifth-grade teacher, Special Ed EA, etc.). Some subs are hesitant to accept jobs if they are too generic. We will continue to research suggestions and trends that could enhance our fill rate and quality. Please continue to offer your ideas; your perspective is beneficial to looking at the issue from every angle.

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**ELEMENTARY (cont'd)**

**Porter**

**6. How much money is the new GATE program costing Birdville?**

- A. Birdville ISD receives a state GT allotment for a percentage of the gifted student population which is to be used to provide programs for gifted students. Local funds are also used to make up any difference between the expense of the programming and the state allotment.

With the new GATE program design, Birdville ISD will be able to maintain the current number of staff positions. Money has been budgeted to pay for specific programming such as on-line Latin for grade 5 GT students and a limited number of Chromebooks for each centralized site. Funds within the budget have been redistributed and supplemented to pay for the CogAT to be used as a universal screener in first grade. The largest expense will come from transporting students to the centralized site.

We were able to accommodate all of these program changes and meet our program goals of doubling the provision of services to all GT students in grades 3–5 and extended time in grades K–2, giving students at every campus the opportunity to work with students of similar ability, and deepen the opportunity for learning. The cost for this program redesign is approximately the cost of adding 1.5 gifted and talented interventionists; however, a simple addition of 1.5 interventionists in the existing model would not have enabled us to increase services equitably for all students across the district.

**7. Are there plans to have full-time APs on each campus next year?**

- A. We are currently evaluating this additional personnel request. Hopefully, funds will be available to staff all of our campuses with full-time assistant principals.

**Snow Heights**

8. Each six weeks, departmentalized teachers at my school have 1,368 recorded grades in 3 content areas for 2 classes (nearly 40 students). Self-contained teachers, on average, have 1,020 recorded grades each six weeks. **Getting social studies grades reduced down to 6 is a great start, but would it be possible for the other content areas to be reduced to 9?** This way teachers can spend more time planning well and assessing through more formative measures than spending so much time grading papers. A reduction of grades required would also allow teachers the flexibility to honor the learning continuum ... they would not need to take grades on new learning but truly reflect the cumulative knowledge of the students accurately over the term or course of the unit. We would be able to ensure quality grades that truly reflect learning and not just assignments that are taken because a grade is needed to meet the quota.

- A. We will revisit with the principals. Please recall that the goal is grading authentic learning, not just a number of grades. A journal entry in science could also be reviewed for ELAR and two grades could be taken for one assignment. Please also keep in mind that the fewer grades a student has results in less opportunities to recover from an assignment they did not do well on.

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**ELEMENTARY (cont'd)**

**Snow Heights (cont'd)**

**9. Would schools receive extra funding or personnel if they are designated as a school of choice?**

A. Not necessarily. It depends on the area of specialization. For instance, North Richland Middle School received a grant from the Hudson Foundation and some funds from the District in order to start the teacher training necessary to become STEM-certified. In addition, there was a campus certification license that had to be funded. This grant, along with District funds, made it possible for the STEM designation. This is not the case in all instances. The District is strongly encouraging campuses to look for areas of focus that will not be overly costly, disruptive, and/or cumbersome in implementing. We will work with the campuses to help support an approved focus.

**10. Recently, our bus was 45 minutes late picking up our students. Our parents did not receive notification from the Department of Transportation. Our principal was attending a district-related meeting and the office staff had already left for the day when this occurred. Parents were frantic and worried over the absence of their children. One parent was on the brink of calling the police. Many parents came in the next day to report their anger and concerns over the lack of communication. Through all of this, the school was never contacted by the Department of Transportation communicating the late departure or the fact that our elementary students were placed on a bus with middle school students (another complaint of parents). When parents were directed to contact the Dept. of Transportation for answers, the director stated that we were at fault for not communicating. **What is the appropriate line of communication in these situations?** From our perspective, the Dept. of Transportation is at fault. They have all of the contact information for students who use their services and have the quick ability to communicate quickly with parents through Blackboard. When a bus is going to be late dropping students off in the mornings, the school is typically contacted ... why can parents not be contacted in the event a bus will be late dropping students off at home?**

A. Our general practice has been that campus administration will notify parents of any bus-related issues. We believe the circumstances surrounding the incidents of the day in question were an anomaly. A mechanical issue was discovered on the bus at Snow Heights. The bus driver notified the teachers waiting with the students that another bus would be coming. All other mechanics were dispatched that particular day; therefore, it took additional time for another bus to arrive at the campus. Due to the late arrival of a second bus, a decision was made to pick up the North Richland Middle students prior to delivering the Snow Heights students to their homes. Our staff mistakenly assumed that the campus administration was aware of the issue. We apologize for the confusion.

We are working on some alternative solutions for parent notification. We hope to have a call system that will allow us to contact parents in case we have a situation like this in the future.

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**ELEMENTARY (cont'd)**

**Stowe**

- 11.** The janitors are afraid to go out to their cars at night. We never know when someone may be watching them. We would like to help our janitors feel more safe and ask that we have the lights on outside while they are here working at night. **I would request at least for an hour after they are scheduled to be off. We need our janitors, and we want them to feel safe.**
- A.** We asked the night custodial crews to relocate their cars near their exit door once the campus staff leave the building for the day. Lighting in the parking lot and/or near the end-of-shift exit doors will be turned on 15 minutes before and after their shift ends.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Haltom**

- 12.** I think kids would benefit more if we had 6 weeks district tests. The feedback and data would be more frequent and accurate versus having a district CBA that allots for maybe two questions per TEK. That is not enough data to really understand if a student has mastered the standard or not. **Is that something that could be considered for next year?**
- A.** The District has previously considered the feasibility of District-generated six-week tests, and it was determined that the practice could not be supported at the District level on both practical and philosophical grounds.

Under our current CBA system, the District produces approximately 170 assessments annually in grades 2 – 11 in reading, writing, math, science and social studies, in both English and Spanish. Through the joint efforts of the Teaching and Learning, Assessment, and Bilingual/ESL departments, an extensive process is followed to create, vet, edit, translate, produce, and distribute CBA assessments and answer documents for each administration. This process has been developed to help ensure that assessments are well aligned with the standards, course scope and sequence, and produce scores that are valid and reliable. Our current system does not have the capacity to support what would amount to doubling the number of tests produced. Taking on such a task would require hiring additional staff or necessitate the acceptance of lower-quality assessments. Neither of these is tenable.

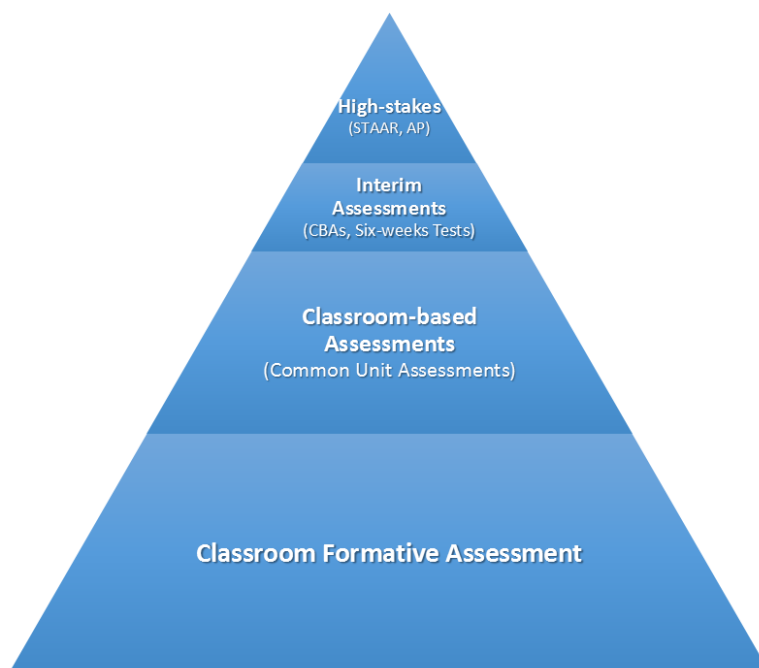
Our District philosophy on assessment is that in order to maximize the use of assessment data to guide instruction, a greater emphasis should be placed on short-cycle formative assessments and common unit assessments for learning, rather than on summative assessments of learning, such as six-weeks tests and CBAs (see pyramid graphic below). The District Planning for Learning model guides the work of the PLC to begin with the standards to design assessments (formative and common unit) first when planning for units of instruction.

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**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Haltom (#12 cont’d)**

Thus the design of instructional delivery should be closely aligned with what students need to know and do as demonstrated through assessment. Building in formative assessments on the learning pathway allows teachers to respond and adjust along the way when students are not learning. While District-developed six-weeks tests may provide some additional ways to compare performance of students between campuses, the data generated by such tests are much less actionable than classroom formative and campus common unit assessments, and will likely be less aligned with instructional delivery. In addition, the multiple-choice format commonly used in high-stakes and interim assessments (such as six-weeks tests) usually does not reveal the students’ thought processes which lead them to correct or incorrect answers. However, use of formative assessment strategies and creatively-designed common assessments that require students to respond in open-ended formats can provide a wealth of information about where misconceptions and gaps in learning may exist.



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**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Haltom (cont'd)**

**13.** I know some districts pay teachers to help write the curriculum for the next year. I think this would help science specifically at the middle school level due to the variation in mastery of standards from school to school. **Is this something BISS has ever thought of doing?**

**A.** For all levels, Birdville ISD utilizes teachers for curriculum writing in collaboration with the curriculum coordinators. BISS pays for their services when allowed. If the curriculum writing occurs during the school year when a teacher is on-contract, we are not allowed to pay them for their work. We pay for the substitute required for the teacher to be off-campus. If the curriculum writing occurs during the summer (off-contract), then teachers are paid a stipend for their services.

**14.** **If we continue to use OERs to test process standards, has the district considered using a question that addresses the process of answering the question, instead of the formality of the writing?** For example, a real-world surface area question requiring students to find the total surface area of a prism or cylinder. This covers 8.1A (real-world), 8.1B (analyzing information, using formulas), 8.1C (selecting tools, technology, formulas), 8.1E (organizational charts), and 8.1F (communicating mathematical ideas).

Also, the weight of the OER question is so much heavier than the rest, so if our kids answer the question, but not to the extent of the OER rubric, then they could easily fail the entire CBA. **Has the district thought about changing the way that specific question is weighted?**

**A.** The rationale behind including an OER on the District CBAs is to provide students with the opportunity to show their thinking related to solving a problem. This allows the teacher to see what the student knows and understands about the content TEKS being tested.

Each OER is aligned to a math content TEKS first. The question is then coded with process TEKS 1G because the students are being asked to explain and justify mathematical ideas using precise mathematical language in written communication.

A rubric for grading the OER was created with input from secondary teachers across the District. The rubric grades writing on a student's conceptual understanding of the concept being tested, thinking related to the question, computation, writing (does the student use academic vocabulary, write in complete sentences), as well as cohesiveness (someone reading the response can follow the student's explanation and thinking). If the student attempts to answer the question, they receive a score of at least 1.



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**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Haltom (#14 cont'd)**

The District has played with the weight of the OER and found that weighting the multiple choice questions more heavily did not have a significant impact on the number of students passing the CBA. Please keep in mind that the purpose of the CBA at the District level is to provide information on student mastery of the curriculum, and on the overall alignment between the written curriculum and instructional delivery. Detailed analyses of CBA results identify gaps in teaching and learning that are then addressed through enhanced communication with campuses, focused training for teachers, and continuous improvement of the curriculum.

At the campus level, CBAs provide professional learning communities and teachers with information on the alignment of instruction and campus-based assessments with the appropriate context and level of rigor intended by the curriculum and evidenced in the standards. CBA results may be used in a formative manner to recognize gaps in learning requiring re-teaching or to identify students in need of remediation. CBA data also may be used to drive discussions at the campus level about the effectiveness of instructional strategies in an effort to continuously improve instructional delivery.

**HIGH SCHOOL**

**Haltom**

**15. As I understand it, Shannon will be structured differently going forward. Will this change requirements of students who wish to enter Shannon?**

- A.** The admission requirements that include the recently adopted probationary admission opportunity will not change based on the implementation of the blended learning flex model. Shannon High School remains committed to building supportive relationships with highly at-risk/Tier 3 students so that they may become empowered and earn their high school diploma. The recently adopted probation admission opportunity that began on March 27<sup>th</sup> expands Shannon's current admission criteria to support specifically identified, high-risk students. These are students who, under ordinary admission guidelines, would not meet specific criteria (age, credits, attendance, etc.), but express a sincere desire to put forth their best effort and transfer to Shannon to realize success in BISD.

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**HIGH SCHOOL**

**Haltom (cont'd)**

- 16. With an ever-growing population of students whose parents don't speak English, how can we go about getting a translation service for phone calls?** True, we have teachers who speak SOME of the languages but it is unfair to burden them when they have other matters to attend to. Additionally, there are times when a parent needs to be spoken to immediately and waiting for others to relay a call can take days or even weeks depending on the language. This is a very viable need for educators AND parents to stay connected and on the same page.

*This question was asked and responded to in April 2016 (see Q & A below):*

**Has the District ever considered using an interpreting/translation service such as CYRACOM?** BISD has a limited number of interpreters and many families who speak languages other than English. A translation service like this would make it possible to access parents and families easily for ARD meetings, parent conferences, teacher phone calls, school programs, etc.

- A.** We have three District Parent Liaisons who provide these services to campuses who need support with Spanish or Vietnamese. In some instances, we contract with Catholic Charities for these interpreting services. We will continue to explore all avenues for providing efficient and effective translating and interpreting services.

- 17. Would the school district ever consider going to block schedule for all high schools?**

- A.** We recently visited this question in an administrative meeting and spoke with a few principals about making such a change. The significant cost for increased staffing given the current state of funding would make it difficult for the District to move from a seven-period day to a block schedule.

- 18. Haltom High School qualifies as a Title I campus, however we do not receive the funding that would benefit our students. Other schools in BISD that qualify for Title 1 funding receive it. Why does HHS not?**

- A.** Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of students from low-income families are eligible to receive Title 1 funds. The District must serve campuses according to campus allocation rules defined in statute which stipulate that campuses must be ranked according to percentage, not number, of students from low-income families. If Title 1 funds are insufficient to serve all eligible campuses, the District must serve **in rank order** those campuses that exceed 75% poverty.

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***HIGH SCHOOL***

**Haltom (#18 cont'd)**

If Title 1 funds remain the District shall serve the other campuses **in rank order** within the selected grade span grouping. Originally, only qualifying elementary campuses were served. The District included qualifying middle school campuses several years ago when our Title 1 funds were significantly increased. Unfortunately, Title 1 has been funded at a stagnant level in recent years and we are anticipating a decrease in Title 1 funds in the future based on the new ESSA guidelines. We are focusing on maintaining Title 1 services at existing campuses rather than reducing services at current campuses in order to add additional campuses.

**19. With the district going to Canvas next year, what technology will be added to the classroom?**

- A. The 2014 Bond is currently the primary source for funding District technology. Campuses that have received technology from the Bond (which includes Haltom High School) have received their allotted devices for their campuses. There are no plans for expansion at this time. While we agree that additional classroom technology would benefit the implementation of Canvas and other instructional software, there is no additional funding available for such expansion. Once the Bond technology is rolled out to all campuses (expected completion by September of 2017), we will focus efforts on a "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) initiative to further enhance classroom use of technology.