

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY

Birdville

1. **Is there a possibility of a dual language classroom in French, at the very least for the newcomers to the USA?** As many schools are having an influx of children from Africa it would be helpful if there could be a newcomer class in French/English to help them before they enter the monolingual classroom.

A. The state defines a dual language program as a program model in which students identified as English Learners are served in both English and another language with at least half of the instruction delivered in the students' primary language. The intent is for students to remain in the program for no less than five years with the goal for students to attain full proficiency in both languages. Instruction in a dual language program is provided by a teacher appropriately certified in bilingual education.

Birdville ISD currently provides a dual language program for approximately 1,800 students whose primary language is Spanish. The dual language program was designed with the help of a Task Force during the 2018–19 school year. Designing an additional dual language program would require time to recruit appropriately certified teachers fluent in both languages, curriculum development, professional learning, vetting and purchase of adequate resources.

In order to provide a dual language program for students whose primary language is something other than Spanish, we would first determine the number of students that would be able to participate. Currently, we have the following enrollment numbers of French-speaking students across all elementary schools in each grade level: PK – 8, Kinder – 9, 1st – 10, 2nd – 12, 3rd – 14, 4th – 5 and 5th – 10. Given the current enrollment of French-speaking students, a dual language program for students whose primary language is French would not be recommended.

At this time, the department of Multilingual Services is developing an ESL Program structure specific to international newcomer students at the elementary school level. This program involves a language and literacy resource, a personalized language plan, as well as ongoing professional development for Teachers and/or Educational Assistants.

2. I heard that we are not supposed to scan our Kroger card when purchasing items with the school P-Card because it's a conflict of interest. **So can't the school get its' own card to scan for the discounts / sale prices when we buy Science consumables at Kroger?** Yesterday I purchased \$21 worth of consumables for science experiments using the P-Card and I could have saved over \$2 just by scanning a card, but was told, "No"! They would rather have us pay full price???? Doesn't make sense.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Birdville (continued)

- A. I really appreciate you alerting us to this issue. The Purchasing Department has created a District rewards account. The main District number, 817-547-5700, should be entered as an alternate ID at Kroger. This information was sent to campus and department staff in September 2019.

Francisco

3. The district is given a certain amount of money to help cover the cost of an individual's insurance premiums. I use my husband's insurance, therefore I don't use that money. **What happens to that money that was given for my premiums? I don't use that money, does the district use it? Do they reallocate it?** I have a teacher site I follow in which other districts give a portion of that money back to the teacher not using it. **What happens to that money in Birdville?**

- A. The state of Texas ceased funding of the District's contribution to the health insurance plan benefit as a separate revenue source in 2010.

Since that time, the District annually budgets funds for the District's contribution to the health plan benefit. The District budget only includes contributions for employees participating in the District health plan.

Green Valley

4. **With the return of the state standard for second grade to teach cursive, could the district look at providing an age appropriate consumable workbook to ensure accurate practice for scholars to learn the correct formation of letters?**

- A. The ELAR and SLAR curriculum contains teacher resources which instruct the teacher on stroke formation and strategies for teaching handwriting. The curriculum reinforces the concept that handwriting should be tied to word work and to student writing as an integrated element. Handwriting practice should be an integrated part of writing and should not replace time for writing. The expense of purchasing a consumable practice book is immense. Teaching and Learning will look into the feasibility of using open source materials for teachers to use with students who might need additional practice outside of Tier 1 instruction. Additionally, we are looking into templates for lined paper.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Smithfield

5. Art is one of the things our students look forward to the most. We have many students with artistic talents that are not able to utilize their skills often. While the teachers do their best to incorporate it and our art team is wonderful, the time that our students are spending on art is limited. **What is the likelihood and/or feasibility of getting full-time elementary art teachers?**
- A. We have started discussing the possibility of increasing the number of people on our Art team so that we would be able to provide art more frequently.

Snow Heights

6. The start of school has been very challenging when it comes to all things special education. From registration, transportation, ARD meetings, and overall communication in special ed, there seems to be a lack of systems in place to allow for a smooth 2019–2020 start of school. Underlying many (if not all) these debacles appears to be our new case management system EasyIEP. A few examples of the struggles our campus experienced are the following:
- Students were assigned to our campus without registering at their home campus.
 - Several special education students that did not receive transportation until midweek of the first week of school.
 - ARD paperwork is taking an inordinate amount of time because of glitches in the new system.
 - From all reports, EasyIEP is anything but easy and this product does not align with our district's goal of being customer service oriented. The lack of communication and delays the program has caused continues to create frustrated staff and many upset parents. **Could you provide insight into the reason behind the decision to switch management systems? Is there a way to purchase additional components in order to make it more user-friendly?**
- A. This was addressed districtwide beginning the week of Sept. 16. While we have formulated a plan for this year, we are evaluating the best plan for the future.
7. **What is the district's vision for creating professional development opportunities for our paraprofessionals?** We understand that their role is very diverse and believe their learning should be differentiated to their individual job descriptions. For example, we have a special education EA that would love the opportunity to learn classroom management skills or specific strategies to help with behavior that does not come from watching a video. In addition, we have an EA who helps in our computer lab that would love training opportunities that would

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Snow Heights (continued)

aid in running the lab with the varied technology resources available from the district. **What is the district's plan for meeting such diverse needs?**

- A. Starting with last year's Professional Learning Task Force, all staff groups who need to receive professional learning were identified and those departments charged with leading their learning began the process of building student-centered professional learning plans. The work to build and complete these plans will continue through this year. One major focus area is on EAs and non-exempt staff. We believe they deserve high quality professional learning aligned to their roles, as well as opportunities to earn flex time. Efforts are being made already to increase the opportunities for EAs to receive learning aligned to their work.

Technology EAs are offered job-specific professional learning on District days and can also request one-on-one training from their Digital Learning Specialist. Training is usually a combination of one-half day computer lab training (management, specific software, etc.) and one-half day with classroom teachers in digital learning sessions. These sessions explore how to intentionally integrate particular technologies and resources with curriculum standards to enhance student learning. These topics allow computer EAs to help students in the lab to practice skills and complete projects teachers have designed.

On District professional learning days in August, technology EAs learned how to implement Be Internet Awesome online digital citizenship curriculum in the morning and then attended sessions with teachers in the afternoon on topics such as Chrome Tips and Tricks, Flipgrid, and implementing PearDeck Interactive Presentations with students.

Special Education has funded the addition of a whole suite of online courses centered around the Exceptional Child within the SafeSchools system. In October, EAs participated in online training for the Texas Behavior Support Initiative and other courses within the Exceptional Child suite within SafeSchools. In October, they will be meeting with the Special Education department for half of the day for training on workplace safety with emphasis on how to protect themselves when students demonstrate aggressive behaviors. They will be able to work on their campuses the other half of the day to complete additional modules available in the Exceptional Child suite of trainings accessible through the SafeSchools portal. When ESC 11 staff are available, the Special Education department will contract with their specialist to provide face-to-face learning opportunities designed to meet the needs of EAs in various assignments.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Walker Creek

8. Has it ever been considered to offer a stipend for LOL members?

- A.** This assignment is considered something that is done within the context of the current instructional day. Teachers are being paid through their contract for time they spend during the day, which does include attending meetings. LOL was designed for the purpose of distributing leadership throughout the District, empowering teachers to be an integral part of decision-making, and partnering with the campus principal to build capacity to improve teaching and learning. Thus, sharing information with colleagues regarding what has been discussed at LOL can be done during the day while teachers are at work and not something that has to be done after hours, which is really the basis of receiving a stipend. The principal has the flexibility to decide how this could be orchestrated. For instance, substitutes could be provided to cover classrooms for LOL teachers to share information with their colleagues. All of the LOL materials are prepared and posted in Google so that LOL teachers have complete access to everything that was used during LOL. This saves time in material preparation. In addition, the principal could ask their coach or a content coordinator to come to the campus and do additional training. Our belief is that LOL is a super PLC that helps to build capacity and collegiality throughout the system. We believe that this assignment is an honor. While leading is about influencing, membership on the LOL is a system structure to ensure that every campus is developing and extending leadership. Through LOL members, the campus is better aligned by receiving the same information, being engaged in critical conversation, and being connected as a system and cluster. In summary, there is a process to get stipends approved. It requires going through HR, the budgetary process and receiving Cabinet approval. Therefore, while we recognize that being on the LOL requires partnering with the principal to influence the practice of other teachers, we believe that the time invested by each teacher is within their normal work time, not an extra duty outside the normal day. Rather than a stipend, a more equitable way of compensating LOL teachers for any extra time would be through the use of Flex time or getting an extra-duty pay request approved. There is a process for each one of those options that the principal would need to follow.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Watauga

9. I am concerned about the amount of time it takes each school year to get technology passwords correct for our littlest learners. It seems every year we have a delay (or new step that the kinks haven't been worked out of yet) right at the beginning of the school year. This is the 3rd week of school and we just received some of our login information. It's very hard on our little ones and stressful on the teachers having to piece together new information and/or reteach login information AFTER we have already created login cards for our students and started using the technology. **What can the district do to make sure these issues are well thought out, planned, and tested before the school year starts?**

A. The motto of our Technology Department is, "We are here to make good things happen for other people." We began planning the changes that were made this summer well over a year ago. The changes were carefully thought out, meticulously planned, and tested, but the timing was tremendously complicated. Our team had to wait on Summer School to finish for the year and also wait on Skyward to be rolled over before making any changes to the production environment. Mountains were moved in a short window of time.

Change is a constant reality in today's world. Mr. Lambson is pondering the creation of a Technology Steering Committee in BISD. The idea is to create a collaborative committee made up of a diverse mix of teachers, students, staff, and community members, along with experts from our technology team. This team will work together to provide strategic direction, input, and support for the success of our projects and initiatives.

Mr. Lambson is also pondering the creation of an online feedback tool that will allow anyone to submit ideas for consideration by the steering committee. Others can "1+" an idea that has been previously shared to move the concept higher on the list.

We are also exploring the creation of an online communication tool that will help us communicate known issues we are working on, without sending out another email.

These ideas are still in their infant stages, but we are working hard to improve our processes. We want to make positive changes without creating undue amounts of stress on those we serve.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Watauga

10. A couple of people in my neighborhood got solar panels on their roofs. The solar companies are always soliciting me through emails, mail outs, and social media advertising. **Why can't BISD properties be solar farms to help pay bills?** Plenty of roof space.

- A.** The District's current electricity provider does not support the installation of solar panels nor will they purchase excess power generated by the solar panels. Unlike homeowners, districts must traverse through complicated bid processes to obtain an electrical provider. We currently have contracts through May 2031 at very competitive rates.

The addition of solar panels is also very costly. If the District was able to use the excess power, the payback period would be close to 20 years.

With the size of our facilities, the solar structure would have to be large. It is questionable as to whether the current roofing systems would be able to handle the weight of the solar equipment. With the hailstorm probability in this area, the District would also have to consider potential costs to repair after a storm.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Haltom

11. **Why do we have to attend a district safety meeting on a teacher workday (Friday, 8/9 or 8/16)? We are already given precious little time to work in our classrooms. Shouldn't this be done on a district PD day?**

- A.** We will look at moving it next year. This year, we had Convocation which limited our available days to schedule this requested and informative meeting.

12. **Why are we having to put all this information at the front of our class (or the way students sit)?** My son, who has ADD, came to my room and he said there is much too much on the walls that he was totally distracted. Teaching Sped students and many others that are not Sped may have this issue. **This is regarding: PDSA, goals, objectives, TEKS, and then lessons the teacher is teaching in the front of the room.**

- A.** The Tier 1 Priorities that were established in 2015–16 to support the implementation of instructional initiatives, only require teachers to post the following:

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 1, 2019

HIGH SCHOOLS

Haltom High (continued)

12. A. (continued)

1. The **Learning Standard**: to be posted in an area that is visible and in a location that the students can interact with throughout the lesson. The teachers, academic dean/coaches and principal made the decision for consistency purposes where these would be posted in each classroom.
2. The **key academic vocabulary from the standard** and **the unit of instruction**: to be posted in an area of the classroom that is visible to the students so that they can interact with the vocabulary. For sheltered classes for EL students and in newcomer classes, teachers also are requested to provide a visual representation for the vocabulary word in order to build background knowledge and as an anchor in long-term memory. The teachers, academic dean/coaches and principal made the decision for consistency purposes where these would be posted in each classroom.
3. **Continuous Improvement components** such as classroom mission statements and PDSA. The PDSA must be a poster or visual so that teachers can track classroom data with the students and formulate a plan to work on strengths and areas of improvement. The teachers, academic dean/coaches and principal made the decision for consistency purposes where these would be posted in each classroom.
4. **Research-based classroom management expectations** (CHAMPs/Restorative Discipline/Capturing Kids Hearts) to delineate for the students what is expected of them regarding their behavior and appropriate consequences. The teachers, academic dean/coaches and principal made the decision for consistency purposes where these would be posted in each classroom.

The only other requirement added for the 2018–19 school year was **RESPECT Agreements** developed by each class period to support the Birdville ISD CORE Values.

Any items other than these requirements, which are posted in the classroom are at the teacher's discretion.