

**Superintendent’s Communications Council
Campus Questions
December 5, 2016**

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

- 1. How will the District of Innovation Plan impact the elementary schools in the other two clusters? Will they be afforded the same opportunities as the schools in the Richland High School feeder pattern that are noted in the plan—Mullendore, Snow Heights, Holiday Heights, and Cheney?**

A. We have a Task Force that will be meeting to come up with a plan for promoting Schools of Specializations. Every principal will be asked to look at an area that could be marketed for the purpose of promoting the campus within and without the attendance zone, including outside the District boundaries. This Task Force will have its first meeting in December and have a proposed plan for the Cabinet and Board to consider by February.

- 2. Recent studies have found that teaching is one of the top three stress-producing professions. The research found that teachers are overwhelmed with a never-ending workload of clerical work, assessing, data collection, data analysis, data input, analyzing standards, endless professional development, constantly changing and new required programs and processes. And, in addition, teachers have all the work that goes with the normal demands that teaching a widely diverse student population requires. The new T-TESS evaluation system has added much stress to the year to teachers as well as campus administrators. Will there be an option to go through this process only every three years as PDAS allowed?**

A. Since the T-TESS model is a growth model, it allows teachers to continue to grow professionally. The pilot T-TESS group made the recommendation to have one formal observation instead of two. This allows for the administration team to complete more frequent walk-throughs and provide feedback. The T-TESS model is also closely aligned to the CIR model which addresses student rigor, relevance and engagement.

While we understand that T-TESS is a new evaluation tool for most of the campuses, we will be able to reduce the amount of time it takes for the clerical piece with the appropriate software. We are currently reviewing several options.

Francisco

- 3. We have many students and families that need social services at our campus. In the past, we had a social worker to help meet the needs of our families. Are there any grants the district can apply for that would fund a social worker for shared campuses?**

A. We are looking for how this can be accomplished this spring. I'm not aware of grant money for the purpose of hiring a social worker (would need to research), but many of our secondary student assistance counselors (SACs) are master social workers and can assist with the social service needs of our families.

On our elementary campuses, however, our counselors can certainly work with our SACs to assist with the needs of our families as well as assist, as they always have, to provide whatever resources are available.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Francisco (cont'd)

4. The state only has a requirement that students must attend so many minutes in a given school year. Some districts have extended the school day in order to shorten the school year. **Is this something the administration has considered?**
 - A. In our District of Innovation Plan, we have waived the time requirements with more of an emphasis on mastery instead of seat time. While we will still have a regular school day, the major emphasis now is on the time necessary for students to master content. We have not discussed extending the school year; instead, we have, in the DOI, provided the language and actions that would allow us to extend learning beyond the confines of the school house. With technology, learning should not be confined to seat time at the school. Now, we are looking for innovative ways to make learning ubiquitous.

Green Valley

5. The Portrait of a BISD Graduate calls for a student to be an (1) empowered learner, (2) responsible citizen, (3) global competitor, and (4) innovative entrepreneur. **What district provided resources, materials, and curriculum are available to elementary teachers in order to provide scholars with learning experiences and opportunities to become global competitors and innovative entrepreneurs?**
 - A. This summer the elementary content coordinators worked with curriculum writers to include the BISD Portrait of a Graduate in their work. Below you will find a link to a Google doc that features strategies and structures found in the curriculum where the BISD Portrait of a Graduate is addressed. The resources for these strategies and resources are found within the curriculum documents. The Teaching and Learning department is here to assist campuses with addressing the BISD Portrait of a Graduate.
<https://docs.google.com/a/g.birdvilleschools.net/document/d/1GySDMpY8sLsDIADfwHC3bPM3RsEpVqx5ir7Fgt4MA1E/edit?usp=sharing>

Mullendore

6. Since I am on the TEE Committee, I am aware that over the next five years, Mullendore and the other schools that feed into North Richland Middle will become Schools of Choice. My question is, **when will they begin implementing this, and have the specific schools been chosen for their area of specialty yet?**
 - A. Nothing has been decided yet about schools of choice/specialization. The plan is to present the DOI plan to the principals at the next ILT meeting. When we developed the DOI plan and did all the presentations to the Board and the public, we made it patently clear that these were only proposals that the Board would ultimately have to approve before any formal action could be or would be taken to implement schools of choice/specialization. This actually means that if we are to embrace schools of choice/specialization much like what Grand Prairie ISD has done, it would require a Task Force of all the stakeholders to meet on

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Muollondore (#6 cont'd)

that and decide what the choice would be and what campuses would be selected. Then, that proposal would need to be presented to the Board as an Information/Discussion Item before it would ever become a Discussion/Action Item.

Principals would have an opportunity to work with any Task Force before we would pursue this.

On the part of your question relating to STEM, I do believe that the elementary campuses that feed into NRMS have a golden opportunity to embed STEM initiatives within the curriculum. It would require training teachers, offering an opportunity to integrate STEM across content areas, and to partner with NRMS to do Saturday activities and maybe even things like Invention Convention, STEM camps, etc. These would not necessarily be STEM schools of choice/specializations, rather, it would be campuses that have a STEM emphasis or specialization. This would provide opportunities for students to be exposed early to STEM concepts in support of the STEM campus at NRMS. Such an approach would only strengthen the skills and concepts that STEM promotes and would be a great segue into middle school.

Great questions, and I appreciate you asking as you begin thinking forward. We have a lot of work to do before anything happens. In fact, the Cabinet is meeting next Monday for an extended time to start talking about the DOI. The most immediate thing that will happen is the adjustment to the calendar and the STEM-certified campus at NRMS.

Porter

- 7. Why don't we get paid time to do parent conferences?** H-E-B ISD gets a half day every year for elementary conferences, but we were told not to use our half day for conferences this year.
 - A. We will discuss this at Cabinet to review the possible options and impact.
- 8. Are the half days going to remain on Wednesdays next year?** We are getting a lot of parent complaints about child care issues and transportation issues. It is also difficult to get elementary students back on track for the week after a half day.
 - A. No, the two half days have been moved to Fridays on the proposed 2017–18 calendar.

Smith

- 9. Can we ask for at least two copies of various chapter books in Spanish for our libraries?**
 - A. Library book purchases are campus decisions. The District provides \$9.50 per student in the campus budget. In addition, bilingual campuses are provided an additional \$2,000 for bilingual books.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Smithfield

10. Is there a way to find funding for afterschool tutorials closer to STAAR?

- A. Currently, Smithfield Elementary has Title I funds, along with their District campus allotment, that can be used for tutoring. Campus leadership can work with the Federal, State and Local Programs department to create priorities with their Title I funds.

11. Our campus is supposed to receive more technology for the upper grades. There has been a freeze due to logins for iPads. Do we know when that will be resolved or can we be given laptops instead?

- A. iPads are scheduled to be delivered to Smithfield Elementary on Wednesday, Dec. 7.

Snow Heights

12. What justification/research does the district have for moving to a 5-day intervention schedule? How does this move potentially affect school culture? Many teachers have used Friday's intervention time to build classroom culture and enrich the learning with all students in a way that is not supported/available with the normal core content instructional minutes. Adding a fifth day of pull-outs infringes upon this. Also, this change affects the interventionists who should be given more time, not less, to plan because they are working to reach our most struggling students.

- A. According to the guide for RtI provided by the Texas Education Agency, students' learning rates and levels of performance are the primary sources of information used in ongoing decision making. Decisions about the use of more or less intense interventions are made using information on learning rate and level. Therefore, the decision to provide intervention 5 days per week is based on our students' needs.

13. What is the research and data supporting the district creating an intervention block and thus reducing instructional time by 45 minutes to an hour each day? Is the district seeing growth in our Tier 2 and 3 students? Are we reducing the number of students on tier 2 and tier 3 since this block was added to the daily schedule? What percentage of the student population (tier 2 & 3) is benefited by this time? What does the data look like and is it worth cutting down the instructional day by this much? Particularly in departmentalized classrooms, the instructional minutes for Social Studies are not there. Classroom teachers are having to force content and Tier 1 priorities into tight and inflexible schedules.

- A. Educational research provides some insight into the effectiveness of an RtI approach; however, there is currently some debate in the literature as to whether sufficient data exists to evaluate the overall efficacy of comprehensive, multi-tiered, campus-based programs. Better evidence exists on the effectiveness of specific components of this model. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has evaluated these components based on the research literature and made recommendations for their implementation into RtI practice in reading (Gersten et. al., 2008) and mathematics (Gersten, 2009).

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Snow Heights (#13 cont’d)

A major premise of the BISD RtI model is that everyone has the responsibility to address the learning needs of students and to respond appropriately when students need interventions regardless of grade level. The elementary and secondary RtI model in Birdville is designed so that it can be implemented within the unique parameters of each level. Intervention is provided in a setting of designated size, number of days and length of time dependent upon grade level. The District RtI Handbook recommends 30 minutes for Tiers 2 and 3 intervention at the elementary level. This is due to the researched-based programs used for intervention. Each campus determines a master schedule that designates intervention time.

However, for any RtI approach to work, it must be based on individualized student data, appropriate and personalized approaches/strategies, with constant progress monitoring and personalized feedback to the student. Students need to know the learning goal(s), where they are in the learning progression, and if they are making progress. If progress is not being made, then the student(s), with assistance and more intense intervention/support from their teacher(s), need to address the learning deficit(s) and make appropriate adjustments. It is a continuous improvement cycle when you really get down to the nuts and bolts of RtI. It is PDSA, constant monitoring, corrective feedback, and charting progress.

The block of time that has been designated is to ensure that RtI is being done. It does not, however, replace what effective teachers do daily for students who need additional support. It does, however, provide a time for an interventionist to provide Tier 3. Information about better and more effective ways for providing RtI are always welcomed.

The elementary principal group will revisit the time frame for intervention block with the Federal, State and Local Programs and Teaching and Learning departments. The goal is for campuses to have some autonomy in order to meet their student’s needs. We do need to meet the federal guidelines for RtI.

All of our students have shown growth, but the rate of growth is what differs between students. In terms of obtaining empirical evidence relating to the success of RtI, it is clear that the classroom teacher, the PLC, interventionists, and campus administrators are in key positions to observe the impact of RtI on student learning. Evaluating the effectiveness of implementation and success of the structures and strategies utilized is essential to the core work of PLCs, and should be part of ongoing discussions at the grade level/department and campus level.

We have tangible evidence from across the District that our students are moving from Tiers 3 and 2 down to Tier 1. As shown in the table below, at the end of the 2013–2014 school year 64% of students in grades K–8 were placed on Tier 1 in reading by collaborative committees, and 67% were placed on Tier 1 in math. By the end of the 2015–2016 school year, the percentage of students on Tier 1 had increased to 69% in reading and to 75% in mathematics.

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Snow Heights (#13 cont’d)

We believe that these data indicate that tiered interventions through our RtI system, and improved Tier 1 instruction, have helped students increase their learning over the past two years.

RtI Tier Placement – Percentage on Tier 1				
Level	Reading (EOY)		Math (EOY)	
	2013–2014	2015–2016	2013–2014	2015–2016
Grades K–2	73.3	74.3	80.4	81.7
Grades 3–5	61.2	66.9	64.1	72.0
Grades 6–8	56.3	64.7	54.1	71.9
Grades K–8	63.8	68.8	66.5	75.4

There were approximately 15,800 students enrolled in grades K–8 as of the end of the 2015–2016 school for whom tier placement information was available. At that time, there were 2,508 students (16%) placed on Tier 3 in reading and 2,414 students (15%) placed on Tier 2. In math there were 1,798 students (11%) on Tier 3 and 2,089 (13%) on Tier 2.

As a system, our intent is to address learning gaps immediately and group within the classroom to address specific students with identified needs. If the Tier 1 response is timely, appropriate, and supported, students will most likely make the academic progress within the classroom without receiving more intensive instruction and support.

Spicer

14. Could a newcomers program be added at the elementary level just like we have at the middle and high school levels? This program would benefit all students that do not speak English and have recently arrived from another country.

A. We will research this possibility. We will involve all stakeholders to give input to the possibility of providing the same support for elementary.

At the beginning of this year, we decentralized the secondary newcomer program and assigned students to their home campus. The District has provided resources to support all our newcomers and we are currently researching additional ESL programs that could adequately support our newcomers.

HIGH SCHOOL

Haltom

15. I am in charge of an organization that takes in about \$20,000 per year for field trips, events and supplies. **Why don't we have central financing, where students can go pay for their activities and then bring us the receipt?**

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HIGH SCHOOL (cont’d)

Haltom (#15 cont’d)

A. We do have an online payment service available to campuses called RevTrak. Many of our campuses utilize this service for payments. For tracking purposes, each activity has to be set up individually. It would be very challenging to set up a system districtwide. No two campuses have the same activities or student groups. Ensuring that each online payment gets coded to the correct activity, campus, and student would be difficult. Please contact your campus office for further information.

16. Second-period students returning from first period at BCTAL routinely arrive considerably late (which is not usually true with other class periods). With our current teaching strategy of mini-lesson followed by student work time, these students almost always miss most or all of the initial lesson. The 6-8 minutes that the students routinely miss on a daily basis results in a cumulative loss of 18-24 hours of class time (9-12 hours/semester). The students are already falling behind, because of missing key portions of the lesson. This does not consider the disruption caused by such late arrival. **Would it be possible for BCTAL students attending only first period to start their classes 5-10 minutes earlier, so that they can leave for Haltom that much earlier to avoid being late?**

At Haltom, we are encouraged to not write passes for students to stay in one class at the expense of their next period, because it implies that the teacher writing the pass feels their class is more important than the next class receiving the student. I feel the same applies if the students are routinely arriving late to second period from BCTAL.

A. The Transportation Department and BCTAL studied this issue for a time period of November 9 – 17 and found that the issue has been the second overflow bus that has been leaving later than the first bus. On average, the time to return to HHS is 12 minutes, which puts the bus returning to Haltom High School during the passing period. BCTAL is committed to ensuring that the buses are leaving on time, and effective immediately, the buses will now leave at 8:07 a.m. so that they arrive at 8:19 a.m. which will give the students 7 minutes to get to their 2nd period class. The possibility of an earlier start time (7:25 a.m.) is being explored by BCTAL for the 2017–2018 school year.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

UEA

17. Counselors’ roles as academic advisors, emotional healers, and assisting with student navigation of career/college options is critical to student success. The American School Counselor Association’s recommend average of one counselor per 250 students. Unfortunately, most caseloads in the district are over 450+ students. The bipartisan legislation overhauled the state’s school accountability system and revamped high school graduations and it drew praise for giving students more options and flexibility. But, as you know, starting in 8th grade, counselors must now help students navigate more graduation options, track their progress and get parents to sign off on their choices. Before HB5, students had a choice of three similar high school plans and now it’s a complicated menu of five plans with paperwork that becomes a mountain.

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PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

UEA (#17 cont'd)

- A. Many districts in the surrounding area are pulling money from other needs to restore counselor positions. **Is there a plan to hire additional counselors to become more aligned with the ASCA's recommended average?** Realizing that graduation coaches have been added and are a tremendous help and resource they do not carry a caseload nor do the same things as counselors.

Certainly the ratio of students to counselors is something we are reviewing annually, especially as duties and responsibilities change as was mentioned. The same goes, however, for having full-time assistant principals at every elementary campus and the need to add more at the secondary level, adding teaching units to have more ideal student-teacher ratios at some campuses, adding instructional coaches (especially at our most at-risk schools), and funding additional resource requests including technology and training. All of these are needs, not wants, and can easily be justified. The challenge is including them in a budget in the absence of additional funding. I would expect an organization like the American School Counselor's Association to recommend a student to counselor ratio that is ideal. Unfortunately, our finance situation is not in a position to support staffing that is ideal for this ratio or other ratios involving student support for Response to Intervention, special education service support, campus administrative support, etc.

The need to add counselors in order to better serve our students, especially under the current circumstances, is acknowledged. This need will be evaluated each budget cycle along with many other needs, and adjustments will be made when this need can be funded and included in the budget.

- 18. What percentage of Special Education students versus general education students are recommended to be in a classroom? The concern is that the number of students receiving Special Education services is half and sometimes more than half in the co-teach classrooms due to ARD decisions. Does the district have a plan to remedy this next year?**

- A. Although there is no legal standard that sets a limit on the number of special education students served in a co-teach setting, best practice is that between 1/3 and 1/2 of the students in the co-teach section would have IEPs that require a co-teach setting. The Special Education leadership works with campuses to insure master schedules that stay within the best practice recommendations. In one case a campus is having to rework schedules to more efficiently utilize the special education staff in order to reduce the numbers of special education students in certain co-teach settings. It is also helpful to remember that it is possible for a student to be in a co-teach class due to the way the schedule falls and not be one of the students who has an IEP requiring a co-teach setting. For example, a student with a learning disability in math may receive co-teach services in math but by happenstance also be scheduled into a co-teach English class. The student does not require co-teach for English. This student would not be included in the count toward the 1/3 preferred standard.