

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
December 14, 2021

ELEMENTARY

Binion

1. Was there a follow up with neighboring districts to find out about their testing dates for STAAR and if they are consecutive or not?

A. I sent an email to R11 TSNAP group (DTCs) and I posted a message on the TSNAP board for the entire state. I received little input.

- **Denton:** They have “zones” which means they are doing different things depending on the area (vertical team).
- **Castleberry:** She is letting her campuses choose a testing date. *FYI: We do not align with this practice.*
- **H-E-B:** All in the first week of the window (online).
- **Garland:** All three in the first week of the window (online).
- **Eagle Mountain/Saginaw:** All three in the first week of the window (online) BUT they are now asking for feedback from principals. They would also be okay with moving 5th grade science to the 8th grade science day.
- **Northwest:** All three in one week.
- **Stephenville:** All three in one week, however, they may move science to the Friday.

Green Valley

2. I want to ask about getting SMART TVs. In most other schools all classrooms have it, and in a world revolving around using technology and making learning interactive, I think it's a necessity for all classrooms to have one. Is there any plan for all schools/classrooms in the district to be getting them? What would that timeline look like?

A. In Birdville ISD, Technology does not provide SMART Boards®. The Technology Department worked to include SMART Boards in the 2014 and 2018 bond programs. Both times, however, the Bond Planning Committees removed them from the final bond proposals that went to the board and voters.

All BISD SMART Boards have been purchased using department funds (Aspire, Fine Arts, Special Education, etc.), campus budget/activity funds, or Title 1 funds.

Technology will be reviewing our Classroom Technology Standards with the Technology Steering Committee in our next meeting and, based on the Committee's input, may pursue this again as part of a future bond program.

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

Green Valley (continued)

3. The past few weeks have been challenging with continuous assessments and minimal time for instruction. I realize only first and third grades administer the CogAT. However, our students have taken CBAs, writing composition, CogAT, F&P, progress monitoring and interims. **Yes, data is important, but with all this testing are we getting valid data?** When the assessment calendar is created at the beginning of the year, it would be very beneficial to schedule these assessments so they don't overlap or are continuous for weeks and also allow planned time for instruction between assessments. **Is it possible to review the amount of assessments given each year and combine or eliminate some of the assessments?**
- A. Yes, we are in the process of conducting a survey through our Leaders of Learners. In addition, we are working with neighboring districts to discuss the magnitude of assessments, some of which have been mandated by the state. Finding the balance between what is required, what is necessary to direct instruction, and what can be abandoned is what we are working towards.

Mullendore

4. **What is the reasoning behind us having to fill out a flex time sheet when our trainings are in Eduphoria?**
- A. Flex days are waiver days and if staff are to be paid for the days, there must be a record of professional learning. The approval process provides the documentation required for the waiver. Staff use the Flex Day Request for Approval form in eduphoria! Formspace to submit up to 14 hours of professional learning to be considered for approval by their principals or directors each year. All requests must be submitted at least one calendar week in advance of the flex day. Approval must be received prior to the flex day. Flex eligible trainings are identified in the Birdville ISD eduphoria! Strive catalog; however, many opportunities for professional learning are offered by outside providers. The approval process permits the supervisor to determine alignment between professional learning goals and trainings. Supervisors can monitor the flex time earned on campus through the Flex Day Approval form for all members of the staff. This is not possible through the Strive system.

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

Mullendore (continued)

5. Are after school meetings and trainings eligible for flex time? If not, why?

- A.** After-school TRAININGS are eligible for flex time and it is indicated as such in Strive Course Catalog.

In the catalog, next to the session, there is a statement that reads:

The following credit is given when the course is completed:

- ♦ CPE [lists how many credits]
- ♦ Flex-Eligible [lists how many credits]

After-school MEETINGS do not count for Flex Time as they are not Professional Learning.

Sometimes a session may be entered into the course catalog and it wasn't noted as Flex-Eligible. That simply means we didn't know it was a Professional Learning session. So, just because it doesn't say it's Flex-Eligible doesn't mean it's not. If a teacher printed out their transcript and said, "This and this were PL after hours" the principal could always approve it even if it doesn't say "Flex-Eligible." Also, as a presenter, when you are requesting for your session to be added into the Course Catalog, if you see that it wasn't listed as Flex-Eligible, it is a simple phone call to the PL office and we can update the credits on our end.

6. Why can we not use the professional development days for these trainings?

- A.** State-approved waiver days must focus on instructional best practices. Meetings do meet the criteria for state waivers.

7. Why does the district not allow teachers to complete Reading Academy in the summer like other districts across the state? This is putting a huge amount of unnecessary stress on teachers during the school year in a time of unprecedented difficulty.

- A.** ESC 11 is the authorized provider for the Birdville ISD Reading Academies. There is a contract of services agreement which determines the official start and finish dates. The blended Reading Academy is designed to coincide with direct classroom instruction. The pacing guide is designed for teachers to obtain the necessary learning prior to the required artifacts demonstrating practical application to the classroom. The length of the academies is

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Mullendore (#7 continued)

moving to the blended model was at the request of campuses to relieve the face-to-face training requirements. This removed the autonomy to move to a different cycle of time. Additionally, matching the academies to the school calendar ensures that a majority of those needing training are on contract. Please reach out to your Reading Academy coach if you are struggling and need assistance.

Porter

- 8. We would like to ask for clarification on why 5th grade science only takes a spring interim test and not one in the fall – and, can that same reasoning be applied to math?** In reading, content is often addressed throughout the year in various ways. In math and science, students learn specific, isolated units on different topics. The interim window is next week, which is only the 12th week of school. It is very difficult to explain to the students why they are taking a STAAR test, and justify the loss of instruction time to administer the test, when students have only learned 1/3 of this year's math curriculum. I understand the need to practice online testing, which we do in class throughout the year. We know that students need to be familiar with the testing platform and all of the online features before STAAR. However, I do not understand how it is helpful to subject them to several hours of testing in which more than half of the questions cover content they have not yet learned. When we do the spring interim, we are told it will show growth.

However, is it truly growth when the content was not taught at the time of the fall interim, but has been taught by the time they take the spring interim? In that case, students have not grown in their understanding, but have now been taught something they were not previously exposed to.

- A.** In previous years, it was decided through the District Assessment Committee, that the interims would replace CBAs in content areas that do not have the corresponding interim assessments. We can certainly consider going back to CBAs. That is something that can be added to the LOL assessment survey in order to gain perspective across all campuses. Please see bullet points below for additional details:
- 1.** The interims replaced the applicable CBAs.
 - 2.** Science only has a "linear" assessment (it doesn't have the multi-stage assessment) and it is only available towards the spring.

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

Porter (#8 continued)

3. A pretest/post-test model is effective as it can drive instruction regarding content that has already been taught. This is especially effective for mathematics since it is a spiraling curriculum.
9. The number of tests have been consistently increasing throughout the years. It has become overwhelming. In total, the Elementary ELAR classes are required to administer the Benchmark Assessment Systems (BAS) BOY, MOY, EOY, Grammar CBA, Compositions BOY, MOY, EOY, Istation, fall and spring interims, and progress monitoring for all of our students. As teachers, we constantly are collecting data from our classroom work and what we observe when working with our individual students. We strive to meet our students' needs, but it seems testing and collecting data has become the priority. Every school, every class, and every student is different and as teachers we know our class best. **Why does the district require us to fill the majority of our year with testing windows and data collection?** The additional paperwork, time to test, and time to enter data has all created yet another obligation that falls on our shoulders. As professionals we would appreciate your consideration in decreasing testing requirements.
 - A. We realize assessments have been added recently by legislation, some of which require 1–1 administration. The District is considering options/solutions within our control. A survey is currently being designed to solicit feedback from campus principals and their LOL teams. The survey will serve to determine which assessments (within our control) are most meaningful and provide the most imperative/timely data. BISD is committed to establishing a reasonable expectation for the use of assessments to guide instruction and monitor student progress. The bullet points below are examples of required assessments at the state level, as well as notes on local assessments:
 - **Note:** The STAAR assessments are changing in spring 2023 and will incorporate a writing component for grades 3–8. As a result, this will need to be reviewed and revised to align.
 - One of the compositions falls during the TELPAS window so it can also be used to meet one of the five required writing samples.
 - The screeners meet state requirements:
 - BOY/EOY for Pre–K
 - BOY for K–2nd
 - Dyslexia Screener for K–1st
 - ERI codes for K–2nd
 - HB 3 Board Goals

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

Porter (#9 continued)

- The interims replaced CBAs for the applicable subject. As a result, nothing additional was added.
- While we do have mClass and Istation, grades do not take both. K–2nd grades use mClass for reading and grades 3–5 take Istation. The clarification is needed as it sounds like all students take both.

10. Since BISD has had an emphasis on literacy, is there a time in the near future that we will be able to have full-time librarians on all campuses? This would help create stronger readers and readers who are able to make connections and grow their love of reading.

- A.** We definitely want to support and encourage our students to become stronger readers. We also realize that librarians are critical to reaching this goal. To this end, we will review our staffing protocols for full-time librarians in the upcoming 2022–23 budget process.

Smithfield

11. With the way wages are rising- does the district plan to address an EA pay increase going forward to help with staffing shortages? We have heard concerns from EAs that they could make more money by leaving the schools and working in fast food or retail.

- A.** There are a number of staffing challenges in District departments due to competing salaries and higher wages in other industries. The District conducts a salary review each year with the Texas Association of School Boards. Areas identified in that review are prioritized and reviewed during budget time. These reviews normally occur in February. Identified areas will be addressed as funds are available.

Snow Heights

12. Now that other districts have moved to a 9 week grading schedule, has Birdville thought any more about following suit? There are many benefits to a 9 week grading period which include more time for students to show mastery of difficult concepts/standards. It also allows more time for intervention for students who are struggling before grades are reported/posted. In support of SEL, it would also relieve stress and pressure from students and give them time to learn and complete work. In the past, the district has stated this would not work in conjunction with UIL but now other districts, such as Keller, are moving to 9 week periods and still following UIL rules and eligibility. **Is this something BISD can look into again for the future?**

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Snow Heights (#12 continued)

- A. At the October 28th Board meeting, this proposal was presented and is on the the November 18th Board meeting agenda as a recommended action item for Board consideration. Mr. Baskerville will begin work on the 2022–23 school calendar and the nine-week grading periods will be worked into that process. In addition, there are at least three policies that will need to be adjusted and approved by the Board because of their reference to six-week grading periods.
13. Adult prices for a lunch from the cafeteria seem really high this year. Teachers who purchase a school lunch are still being served the same portion as students but paying a much higher price. **Is there a reason an adult portion cannot be given for an adult price? Or is this something the district could look at as a possible benefit to employees to offer discounts on lunch?** With insurance cost increases eating up any raises we get, other benefit incentives would be greatly appreciated.
- A. The school lunch program is federally funded and has numerous guidelines. There is a specific calculation required for adult lunch prices. The District is not allowed to charge less than the calculated adult lunch price. This ensures that the federal reimbursement and student payments do not subsidize meals served to non-program employees. Portion sizes may not be larger than servings allowed for high school students. Adult meals at all campuses are measured by the high school portions.

ACFT

14. Since the district is requiring teachers and staff to use their personal cell phone devices for the safety app and for multifactor identification **do you plan to offer some kind of stipend for the cost of paying for that cellular device or provide cellular devices? If not, is there another option for those who do not feel comfortable using their personal devices for work purposes?**
- A. **Baskerville (Safety App – Navigate 360):** Cabinet is currently discussing. Thank you for giving us this feedback and opportunity to deliberate for a common solution.
- Lambson (MFA):** Multifactor authentication does not require a cellular data plan. One of the options of multifactor security is to receive a voice call or text message on a personal device. The Microsoft Authenticator app is a convenient option for those who choose to install it on personal devices. It allows for much faster authentication approvals, but it is not required.

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ACFT (#14 continued)

The Microsoft Authenticator app does work over Wi-Fi so if the user is on our Wi-Fi network, a user would have no problems using that app if they prefer not to receive a text message.

Here is a link to the instruction for the app: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/account-billing/download-and-install-the-microsoft-authenticator-app-351498fc-850a-45da-b7b6-27e523b8702a>

Since there are MFA options that do not require a data plan the district is not providing cell phone stipends to everyone for MFA.

- 15. (This is a praise and not a question.)** I want to give a huge thank you to BISD technology for the rollout. I didn't have to drive anywhere! I showed up and my technology was here for me. Then, they sent techs to help with any questions. Super impressed with the ease in which we transferred technology from one form to another.

Walker Creek

- 16.** Last year we were told from the Superintendent council that they would be looking at us being able to use SafeSchools training for our flex time like other surrounding districts since we have to complete this on our own time. **Has this been looked at for this school year?**
- A.** There are required mandatory training modules in SafeSchools that cannot be used for flex time. However, there are some that could be used for flex time, such as special education topics. The requirement for earning flex time is that it must be done outside the school day and it is optional. Mandatory trainings, however, are not optional and are meant to be done inside the school day. In addition, most of these required/mandatory trainings are in legislation and apply to all staff. Another requirement for flex time is that it has to be focused on improving student learning. Thus, designated flex days must meet the state requirement for approved professional learning. Other staff besides instructional auxiliary staff (such as office staff) earn comp time not flex time. If they do not have comp time to use for flex days, they must take personal leave, work, or attend training approved by their supervisor that would qualify for comp time.

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Watauga

17. The district is currently offering incentives for teachers to become nationally certified. Nurses are on the same contract and also have a national certification available. **Can nurses be considered for the incentive?**
- A. Nurses are not eligible for the Texas Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) as established by HB 3. The TIA was developed to provide a pathway for teacher recognition, retention, and increased salary. More information is available on teacher eligibility and the pathway to National Board Certification for teachers at <https://tiatexas.org/national-board-certification-and-tia/>
18. **Why did we do away with allowing teachers to have small refrigerators in our classrooms? Is it because of energy consumption?** If it is, I have heard of districts having staff pay a fee of \$25 (or another reasonable amount) per school year in order to cover some of the cost of the extra electricity that a refrigerator uses. Having a refrigerator is helpful to keep drinks, snacks, and lunches cold. They also provide a safe, pest-free way to keep food in the classroom.

SCC Q&A response to a similar question from the 5/14/12 SCC Q&A

- A. Across the District, there are many campuses that do not have the electrical capacity to support these appliances. Therefore, the District will continue not allowing personal refrigerators and microwaves in the classrooms. However, if there is an educational or medical reason a refrigerator is needed in a room, a special request can be made to the principal. (Refrigerators will not be permitted in classrooms because of convenience.) The District does not allow personal microwave ovens in the classroom under any circumstance. Principals may request an evaluation to ensure there is adequate refrigerator space available for staff.

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Haltom

19. **Is there a plan for attendance zone realignment any time in the near future?**
- A. There are no plans in the near future to make adjustments to the attendance zones.

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS (continued)

Haltom

20. How can we trust the state? They told the media, students and parents the STAAR test will NOT count against them. Now they are requiring any student who failed to attend 30 hours of tutorials for EVERY subject they failed.

- A. The Texas Education Agency and the Commissioner of Education are subject to the direction of legislation. There are times when guidance from TEA in certain circumstances is countered by action of the Texas State Legislature. As is the case with the local school district, TEA must be responsive to legal mandates. Please engage your state representatives in conversations around best educational practices.

Smithfield Middle

21. Currently the middle school coaching stipend is \$5,500 a year. Could we as a district and you as Superintendent please review the current coaches stipends with other districts in North Texas in an effort to attract talented coaches and keep talented coaches on staff at the middle school level?

- A. We will review stipends as we proceed through the budget planning process beginning in January. We do this every year and try to address as many stipends as we can. It is with great certainty we will collect data from surrounding districts to evaluate our position on current stipend amounts. Our goal is to be as competitive as we can to retain the great coaches we have in our district.

22. With the new technology, will there be an update for document cameras?

Several cameras are out of date or no longer working, the iPads and the Reflector app no longer work with the iPads, many teachers are stuck unable to utilize the ease of a document camera.

- A. At this time, the Technology Department does not have any plans to update document cameras across the district. Not every teacher uses a document camera like they do a computer. We have to ensure funds are being spent on equipment and devices that get utilized, especially equipment that is rolled out districtwide. Document cameras were issued to elementary teachers and made available to secondary teachers in the 2014 bond program, which closed out long ago. Technology is willing to work with any campus that wishes to purchase document cameras for their staff by splitting the purchase cost between the campus/department and Technology. Campus administrators can reach out to our help desk with the number of devices they wish to procure, and we will help provide half the cost.

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS (continued)

Smithfield Middle (#22 continued)

Technology will be reviewing our Classroom Technology Standards with the Technology Steering Committee in our next meeting.

Watauga Middle

23. Why are pre-existing medical conditions the only acceptable vaccination exemption and exclude religious exemptions? Texas Administration Code Rule 97.62.

- A. [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §97.62](#) describes the conditions under which children and students can seek exemptions from immunization requirements in Texas elementary and secondary schools, and institutions of higher education. Exclusions from compliance are allowable on an individual basis for medical contraindications, active duty with the armed forces of the United States, and reasons of conscience, including a religious belief.

Children and students in these categories must submit evidence for exclusion from compliance as specified in the Health and Safety Code, §161.004(d), Health and Safety Code, §161.0041, Education Code, Chapter 38, Education Code, Chapter 51, and the Human Resources Code, Chapter 42.

- (1) To claim an exclusion for medical reasons, the child or student must present an exemption statement to the school or child-care facility, dated and signed by a physician (M.D. or D.O.), properly licensed and in good standing in any state in the United States who has examined the child or student. The statement must state that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the child or student or any member of the child's or student's household. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.
- (2) To claim an exclusion for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the child's parent, legal guardian, or a student 18 years of age or older must present to the school or child-care facility a completed, signed and notarized affidavit on a form provided by the department stating that the child's parent, legal guardian, or the student declines vaccinations for reasons of conscience, including because of the person's religious beliefs. The affidavit will be valid for a two-year period from the date of notarization. A child or student, who has not received the required immunizations for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs, may be excluded from

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS (continued)

Watauga Middle (#23 continued)

school in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of the department.

NOTE: These exemptions pertain only to students in Texas who seek exemptions from school-required immunizations. These exemptions are not for employees seeking exemptions from employer-mandated immunizations.

HIGH SCHOOLS

Birdville

24. What are the superintendent's top 3 priorities for the district?

- A. Connect with the community;
Create leaders; and
Encourage innovation.

Haltom

25. Why can't staff earn flex time with all the numerous online modules we are required to do on our own time? (i.e., SafeSchools, PSAT)?

- A. See answer provided in #16 above.

Richland

26. Is the district aware of the degree in which they are asking teachers to use their personal cell phone for school use? We have been told we must download Navigate 360 in case of an emergency. We are highly encouraged to use "Remind" as a communication tool which is an app. Lastly, we have been asked to use our personal cell phone as a secondary "off-network" device that must be used for multi-factor authentication. **The school district does not pay for our personal phone therefore what is the alternative to using our personal cell phone?**

Technology has yet to get my school phone to work because I do not have a cell phone that is used for school purposes. Yes, I understand it's just simply a text or phone call but assuming teachers have a working cell phone that they feel comfortable using to receive a verification code is a huge assumption. In fact, I was told to PURCHASE a "cheap pre-paid phone". I am confused why I have to BUY something to make SCHOOL technology work. Moving forward, I believe the district should be more aware of when they are asking teachers to use their personal devices and not assume teachers will do it. As well, they should always offer an alternative option.

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HIGH SCHOOLS (continued)

Richland (#26 continued)

- A. Cabinet is currently discussing. Thank you for giving us this feedback and the opportunity to deliberate for a common solution.
- 27. Is there any plan for the district to pay AP teachers a stipend?** AP teachers spend a great deal of time planning and grading. In many of the classes writing is 60% of the test and it is extremely time consuming to grade writing assignments. Other districts in the area pay a stipend to AP teachers based on the number of hours teachers spend outside the class time. Also teachers that have two or more AP classes are given an additional conference period in order to prep for those classes. **Would this be a consideration as well?**
- A. It is certainly true that AP teachers spend time planning and grading as all excellent teachers do, regardless of the grade level and content taught. This is also true for our embedded dual-credit teachers. If it were possible, all teachers need more quality time to plan, prepare materials, and to provide quality feedback to students. We are currently looking at options through the calendar process of how we can provide more quality time to all teachers. In terms of stipends, this is a budgetary consideration that would need to be prioritized with all the other requests that will come through the budget process. It would also require looking at the list of stipends that are provided to see how this request would align with other stipends paid to teachers in the various categories. Analyzing stipends to see if we are in alignment with other area districts based on requests such as this is an annual process that is done during the budget process, which starts in December.