

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 11, 2019

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

1. The Texas Legislature is meeting and talking about funding for education, among other issues. **Do you have any knowledge of what decisions they might make? Fixing Robin Hood? Fixing Texas being at the bottom at funding education when compared to other states?**

A. We do not have definitive information yet. Our belief is that the Legislature does plan to address school finance this session. We will be watching closely and providing information to our legislators as needed.

Binion

2. **How is the pay for custodians and head custodians decided when it comes to working at larger schools with more square footage to clean and a larger student and staff population?**

A. We addressed this issue in January and have created a new pay grade for the seven larger elementary campuses. We hope this higher pay grade will attract qualified applicants.

North Ridge

3. According to recent data, the number of special education students is on the rise throughout the district. With the influx of students, and the level of rigor that is expected from the curriculum, more and more pressure is being felt within the special education classrooms when it comes to providing appropriate instruction within pullout and self-contained programming. Although the academic coaches we have are very knowledgeable in their areas of expertise, it seems that there is a crucial piece of the puzzle that is missing: coaches who are knowledgeable in both special education needs and general education curriculum. It would be quite beneficial to this ever-growing sub-pop to have coaches who can come in and help us reach these students at a deeper level while trying to fill more gaps in the students' learning. **Is there a way for the district to look into funding coaches to address this need?**

A. The Special Education Department and the District have also identified the need for instructional coaches to support our special education teachers. The need is not new nor is it newly identified as a position for consideration. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find the funds to support instructional coaches in this area and to also fund the positions necessary to maintain compliance with the myriad of legal requirements that come with special education law (i.e., completing assessments, holding ARD meetings, providing related services, etc.). We will continue to exhaustively search for ways to fund instructional coaching positions in addition to those positions needed to remain in compliance. If funds are identified, the need will be met.

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

North Ridge (continued)

4. With the push for becoming more and more innovative in the classroom, it is becoming more and more apparent that our online capabilities are extremely antiquated. While we want to provide the best for our students in the classroom, we are sometimes reluctant to do so out of fear of the lesson failing because of internet failures. **Do we have a timeline on when this part of our system will be updated to keep up with our increasing demands for technology online?**

A. The District's internet connectivity originates from the Network Operations Center (NOC) and each building is connected to the NOC through the Wide Area Network (WAN). The current design of the District's WAN is a "ring within a ring" topology. Some campuses only have one or two "hops" to get to the NOC, while others have multiple hops before getting to the internet. The Technology Department is working on an initiative that will re-structure the WAN to a "Fully connected" design. In January, an information item was presented to the BISD School Board that will allow BISD to take advantage of potential E-Rate discounts to save millions of dollars on the construction costs and vastly improve the connectivity at all BISD facilities. These images are small, but they give a visual perspective of the current network design, and the proposed WAN. If approved by both the School Board and E-Rate, we expect the installation to be completed by fall 2020.

The District also operates a content filtering solution in the NOC to protect students from accessing inappropriate content online. Since October, we have experienced three issues where the content filtering solution began blocking all internet traffic. Our systems operations team has engaged the vendor, iBoss, on the issues and recently received new updated hardware. We are continuing to monitor the service and are working with iBoss to ensure peak performance for our students and staff.

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Richland

5. I am having problems with the new system instituted by purchasing. Orders are held up, sometimes for over a month, requiring some information that I am not told is needed. It is difficult, if not impossible to have a vendor added to the BISD approved vendor list. And, some vendors on the list are not delivering expected services (local Barnes & Noble, for example). **How can we have some input on vendors selected and removed from the approved list?**

A. The District does provide an opportunity to allow District employees to add vendors to the approved vendor list. The approved vendor list consists of all requested vendors that have purchasing contracts either through BISD contracts, cooperative contracts or shared interlocal contracts among other school districts or local governments. A purchasing contract is required by State law for all District purchases.

To request a new vendor be added, the campus or department will complete the New Vendor Request Form at the following link and hit submit.

<https://www.birdvilleschools.net/cms/lib/TX01000797/Centricity/Domain/4357/New%20Vendor%20Request%20Form%2010.15.2018.pdf>

These forms are then submitted to the bisd.purchasing@birdvilleschools.net address which is as easy as clicking a button. They are divided among the two purchasing department Buyers. The Buyers have two weeks to review the request and attempt to find a contract available that would allow the vendor to be added to the approved vendor's list. If they are unable to find the vendor, the Buyer attempts to locate existing vendors that might be able to fulfill the purchase request. The Buyer will also look for other vendors through interlocal or cooperative agreements. If the request is very unique, the Purchasing Director may be able to make an exception for the purchase.

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Smithfield

6. Observing master teachers is one of the best ways to grow as a professional. Currently, we having reading model classrooms and coaches to model/set up observations of other teachers. These are each wonderful resources. At times, it can be a bit of a wait to complete these observations due to the need to

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coordinate multiple schedules. Other times, we may need to see something small that wouldn't merit a full blown observation or we may need to be reminded of something that we saw. **Would it be possible to begin a collection of exemplar videos of various anchor routines across the content areas?** Some ideas could be: UPSC problem solving, number talks, writing anchor routines, guided reading lessons, other components of reading lessons, and the district anchor routines being taught/used throughout the contents. If they were housed in Canvas with our curriculum, we could watch them as needed (and as many times as needed) to incrementally grow our instruction. This could be a great addition to our coaches and model classrooms!

- A. What a fantastic idea! Content coordinators, academic coaches, and digital learning specialists (DLS) have videoed a few teachers when we have heard and/or observed the amazing things teachers are doing. We would love to know of any teachers who are doing remarkable things and who are willing to be videoed. Please contact the appropriate content coordinator, academic coach, or DLS if you know of such a teacher. Furthermore, Teaching and Learning is currently discussing ways to add them to the curriculum documents in the "Just-in-Time" Professional Learning section of the curriculum.

Snow Heights

7. The kindergarten and first-grade standards-based report card does not seem to be aligned with the district's expectations of the Fountas and Pinnell levels. We are noticing students that are not on grade level in reading according to BAS testing, but they show mastery on the report card. For example, kindergartners will receive an "M" on the third six weeks report card for identifying all of the letters in the alphabet (uppercase and lowercase), but they are receiving reading intervention as a Tier 2 student based on their Fountas and Pinnell designation of Level A. This issue becomes more problematic when our students get to second grade and numerical grades are assigned. Our second-grade teachers are conferencing with parents to share their concerns, and the parents act surprised by the concern (in regard to reading) because the report card did not indicate any problems. We have highly skilled kindergarten & first-grade teachers who do an amazing job with our young readers and communicate their concerns to parents before they move on to the next grade

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Snow Heights (#7 continued)

level. In the end, we just feel that the report card is not creating a true picture of where students are academically.

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- A. We will bring this topic up with the principals. Possible next steps include creating a grading and reporting committee to review and revise the current report card.

Watauga

8. I feel like we have things rolled out after the school year has begun quite often. After things have happened in this manner we are told that we will work to not have this happen again—but then the year begins, and something else “new” gets introduced to us after school has started. It is hard on the teachers, because we end the year with a good game plan of what we need to address for the upcoming year. We sign up for professional learning over the summer to meet our identified professional needs. We spend the summer and countless hours at the beginning of each school year preparing things for our classrooms—and then, when we come back for district professional learning, there is something new again. It's a curveball to our curriculum that we weren't expecting and it is discouraging. This year, too, it was after the school year had begun that we received new information. We want to follow the district expectations and we want to do what is asked of us, but it is hard to change the tires while the car is moving down the road. We want to all start the year on the same page and have a calm well thought out, well planned, and properly prepared beginning of the school year. Instead we are frantically trying to recreate or re-do things we have already done.

Four specific items that were not prepared for the start of the year:

- Student log-in, changed after school began, just like it did last year. Many teachers had already spent time creating log-in cards for students and worked the first weeks of school teaching them how to log-in and use the clever link, only to have to reteach a different way to log-in with the new portal. Additionally, the portal now requires the little ones to enter log-in information twice. This is tough for the young child to learn this system, then learn a new system, and need to enter it in multiple times. Plus it makes technology something that makes school harder, not easier like it is intended to do. **Why can't the log-in procedure for the year be decided upon and prepared before school starts?**

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Watauga (#8 continued)

- **Writing, curriculum has changed during the first six weeks – Why didn't we start the school year out with these new plans?**
- **RAZ Kids, was not purchased or “opened” to us until the end of the first six weeks. Why is that?** We want to be able to start off our year with the tools we are used to using being ready to go and functioning. Not having this valuable resource ready for us at the start of the year is hard on the teacher and not good for the student.
- A. Software access is governed by the original date the licenses were purchased. If we purchase a piece of software in October, and it is tied to student enrollment, then it would be rolled over to the new school year every October. So, it would contain the prior year's enrollment until the October rollover. RAZ Kids is one of the pieces of software in which the original purchase date is after school starts. In order to keep teachers from seeing students that are not currently enrolled in their course(s), we turn access off until the rollover. In addition, as we rollover each piece of software, we need to test the system to make sure the programming is functioning as it is supposed to. This process can add as much as two additional weeks to the rollover process. We do not have control over the rollover dates, the software companies do. The software companies use the license acquisition dates to plan their programming workload. Most of the time, their software is programmatically tied to the license expiration date which wouldn't allow a rollover even if the company were willing to make an allowance. We are governed by the contract we have with the software companies.

We realize this causes issues and our goal is to have everything a student/teacher needs available when they start school/work. Our current solution for new software acquisition is to write prorated contracts for the current fiscal year. Beginning each July the software licenses would run through June 30 of the following year. This would make the rollovers happen during the summer and the software would be available at the start of school. We have been in talks with RAZ Kids since last year to help us change the rollover date, however, it means rewriting a current contract which has many hurdles that we are working through.

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Watauga (#8 continued)

- **Kidblog:** this is a wonderful resource but we had no idea a membership was being bought for us across the curriculum. WE found out about it at the October 5 Professional Learning day. **Why was that not a part of the beginning of the year information given us—or even why weren't we notified that we'd have this resource and for us to spend time working to incorporate it into our weekly routines back in May or over the summer—so that we could get in there and learn this resource accordingly?**

The Kidblog program has been purchased and available for elementary teachers and students to use for the last three years, however, each individual teacher had to create a class and accounts for their own students. Understandably, this resulted in low usage statistics for the program.

After school began this year, Kidblog met with technology and offered to automatically create accounts for every teacher and his/her students automatically. Technology decided to make the change and worked with Teaching and Learning to take advantage of the October 5th day to introduce the new user-friendly automatic accounts and how Kidblog could be used across the curriculum to improve literacy.

9. Our area of most concern is in writing/ELA. This has happened year after year. We keep being told that it won't happen again, but they continue to change/re-write the ELA curriculum throughout the school year instead of having it prepared before school starts. **What can be done at the district level in order to prevent these issues from occurring in the future?**

- A. According to the Birdville ISD Curriculum Management Plan, we believe curriculum documents are fluid, dynamic, and continuously improved. Therefore, when Teaching and Learning receives data, as well as input from our teachers, necessary revisions to the curriculum will be made. After receiving the STAAR writing scores in the summer of 2018, a committee was formed to look within the system for random variation. The committee looked at curriculum documents and their use by teachers in planning writing lessons, instructional resources, strategies, structures, and student tasks. The committee discovered that the implementation and use of the writing curriculum varied greatly from campus to campus. Furthermore, teachers gave input regarding the difficulty of planning from the current curriculum. Teaching and Learning worked with Norma Jackson to provide teachers with week by week lesson plans using the required resources to assist teachers with planning. The new ELAR/SLAR standards were used in these lesson plans because full implementation of the new standards will be

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Watauga (#9 continued)

implemented beginning in the 2019–20 school year. The committee also learned resources other than the District-required and recommended resources were being used on many campuses. *Patterns of Power* by Jeff Anderson was added to provide teachers with a resource for authentic instruction in revising and editing. In addition, the format of the documents was revised based on input we received from teachers regarding the user friendliness of the format. Teaching and Learning will continue to respond to teacher input and the needs of the District based on data in order to provide the best instruction for our students.

West Birdville

10. So many of our children are at a disadvantage due to imperfect vision that is left undiscovered and/or uncorrected. Vision screenings performed by our school nurses and other community professionals are valuable and catch many students' vision difficulties. Every year, we catch more and more children who need vision correction, and each year it seems that younger and younger students are in need of glasses. Strong, early education is so very beneficial to our students, but they can only retain the learning that they experience. We need them to be able to take advantage of every learning experience possible in order to be as successful as possible. Pre-kindergarten is voluntary. In an interest to catch more children with vision difficulties as early as possible, **could BIRD make it part of the requirements for PK enrollment to have proof of a check-up including vision screening from a pediatrician or health clinic?** It is not really all that different from our older students who want to participate in athletics meeting the requirement of having a current physical on file at the start of any athletic sport season. The athletic physical helps screen for potential risks to the student athlete's health while a current physical including vision helps screen for potential obstacles to the student's opportunity to learn.

A. The qualifications for Pre-Kindergarten eligibility are set by the federal government. Birdville ISD follows the guidelines from the Texas Department of State Health Services which requires 4-year-olds be screened for vision and hearing within 120 days of enrollment. We will continue to partner with our school nurses and community professionals to conduct vision screenings, but we cannot require a vision screener for enrollment into public school.

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ELEMENTARY (continued)

West Birdville (continued)

11. High school and middle school special education teachers receive stipends.
Why are elementary special education teachers not included in the specialized curriculum stipend?

- A. Only the SE department chairs receive a stipend for overseeing the department.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Richland

12. **Would there be any possibility of having a daycare for teachers' children in the future?**

- A. It would be difficult to find a central location that would be beneficial to all staff. Currently, the District does not have the capacity in our existing facilities to accommodate a daycare program. State licensing requirements weigh heavily on a facility's structure. With our aging facilities, significant remodeling would be required for any facility utilized. It would also be difficult to staff the facility efficiently since not all staff members work the same number of days during the year. This would create higher than normal operational costs and higher parent costs, since the facility could not be maintained at capacity.

HIGH SCHOOL

Haltom

13. **Can the business office look at doing a regular payday (the 25th) next year during the holidays?** A 5- or 6-week pay cycle seems silly in an era where the majority of banking is done online. This year, there are two five-week pay cycles back-to-back, which really hurts our teachers. **Could a change be considered?**

- A. The District can process the payroll during the holiday season using the regular payroll date; however, many employees enjoy receiving their pay early to help with holiday expenses. In addition, it is important to process payroll during work hours in case an employee's pay is incorrect or an employee does not receive a pay check. If the payments occur during the holiday break, there are no District staff to assist employees and make any necessary corrections.