

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

1. **At our last meeting, you said that because of HB 2610 our students would not have to make up bad weather days, but that teachers would. If that happens, what would teachers be doing on those days?**
 - A. Teachers would be participating in campus-level staff development. This would vary by campus based on the needs and the areas the principal wants to focus on.

2. Studies have found that by age four, children in middle and upper class families hear 30 million more words than children in families living in poverty; and that five-year-old children of lower socioeconomic status score two years behind on standardized language development tests by the time they enter school. Eric Jensen, in Teaching with Poverty in Mind, cites brain research that suggests that poverty adversely alters the trajectory of the developing reading brain. He also states that the two things that can overcome this disadvantage are education and relationships. Therefore, it seems feasible that school districts should recognize that there is not an even playing field for a class of 22 students at an affluent school and a class of 22 students at a low-income school. In a review of 19 studies the Center for Public Education found:
 - Smaller classes in the early grades (K–3) can boost student academic achievement.
 - A class size of no more than 18 students per teacher is required to produce the greatest benefits.
 - Minority and low-income students show even greater gains when placed in small classes in the primary grades.

Based on all the findings that tell us that lower class size greatly impacts student learning, and with the severe needs of low-socioeconomic students, **shouldn't our district consider keeping the class size at our low-income schools lower to ensure that teachers can work individually with students and build the relationships that Eric Jensen thinks are so important for poor students to have the same access to success that their more affluent counterparts have?**

- A. While it would be ideal to have smaller classes across the district, this is not financially feasible. The District provides additional support through coaches, interventionists and has recently equipped all but a few campuses with a full-time assistant principal.

**Superintendent’s Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016**

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Binion

- 3. How could we arrange the calendar so that the first day back from the winter break is a teacher in-service day?**
- A. The Calendar Committee worked diligently to offer a variety of options for the calendar. Input was gathered from the campuses, TEE Committee, principals and the community before recommendations were brought to the Board. This was one of the options presented to the community before the Board decided on which option worked best for the District. We can certainly take this into consideration in preparation for the 2017–18 calendar committee.

Foster Village

- 4. Since the state has approved Istation as a Texas SUCCESS online resource for grades 3–5 will BISD teachers have access to use it in combination with the purchased STAR 360 Reading resource?**
- A. Istation informed us on January 11 that they are still in negotiations with the state for the Texas SUCCESS contract. Once those negotiations are completed, we expect them to contact us regarding the resources that will be available to the District. It is our understanding that Texas SUCCESS dollars may not be used for universal screeners. If that is correct, the only resource that would be available is the Istation curriculum, not ISIP. We will continue to use STAR 360 as our universal screener for both reading and math. When the three approved Texas SUCCESS resources— Istation curriculum, Think Through Math, and Compass (secondary only)—are available, we will notify campuses about how to access them. We will also update RtI Procedures pages to reflect the appropriate Tier, amount of time, and number of days the resources are to be used.

Hardeman

- 5. What is being done to provide technology in the pre-K classrooms? We have access to the TECH lab on a weekly basis and there are iPads we can check out from the library temporarily since they are to be shared with the entire school. According to the pre-K Guidelines, there are 5 technology application guidelines we are required to cover throughout the year:**
- X.A.1. Child opens and navigates through software programs designed to enhance development of appropriate concepts.
- X.A.2. Child uses and names a variety of computer input devices, such as mouse, keyboard, voice/sound recorder, touch screen, CD-ROM
- X.A.3. Child operates voice/sound recorders and touch screens
- X.A.4. Child uses software applications to create and express own ideas
- X.A.5. Child recognizes that information is available through the use of technology

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

February 8, 2016

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Hardeman (#5 continued)

These are also on our report card. Having daily access to technology is vital to our students mastering these skills. Once a week is not sufficient.

- A. All students in BISD, elementary and secondary, have technology application standards for students. The recent bond is addressing the technology needs on BISD campuses with new, updated technology. The rollout is coming in waves. Wave 1 is 91 percent complete, and Wave 2 will begin in the late spring. In the bond rollout, pre-K will receive a teacher workstation, document camera, and six student iPads. Campus principals have information about when the rollout will happen for their campus. Until campuses receive their bond technology, pre-K will continue to use existing technology in the classroom and/or the computer labs.

Mullendore

6. What is Birdville doing to up the quality of substitutes we have in Birdville?

- A. We have improved our training every year and continue to look at ways to improve. Also, substitutes are blocked from subbing based on feedback from the campus. The District also runs reports for excessive cancellations by the substitutes.

Snow Heights

7. What is the research base or decision making behind the change in instructional minutes? What thoughts are supporting a reduction of time in literacy and math at the elementary level?

- A. At the beginning of the 2014–15 school year, new math TEKS and new math textbooks were implemented in grades K–5. By spring 2015, it was determined through input from teachers and principals that additional time was essential in teaching the new math standards (TEKS). Additional time would allow teachers to have quality time with students to teach the more rigorous TEKS and allow students the opportunity to learn math conceptually.

For math in grades K–5, 15 minutes was added to the instructional time. No minutes were taken away in math. In grades K–2, the additional 15 minute in math came from writing. Writing went from 60 minutes to 45. In grades 3–5, the additional 15 minutes came from reading. Writing stayed the same at 45 minutes.

**Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016**

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Snow Heights (continued)

- 8. When the district began offering a year of free TCC tuition to all graduates, it was stated the money would come from gas royalties. Could you give us an update on how much money the gas royalties brought in last year and how much was used on TCC tuition?**

A. BISD has received \$817,581 in royalties and paid \$96,931 to TCC tuition. In today's economy, BISD is now receiving approximately \$5,000 per month.

Spicer

- 9. There is an article (link included) out right now about elementary schools in Texas giving their kindergarten and first-grade students four 15-minute unstructured breaks each day. Those schools have reported nothing but positive results in their classroom work. Eagle Mountain Elementary is a school in our own area that is doing this and is reporting great success with their students' attention spans and cognitive growth. **Are you aware of this article and if so, do you have plans to further research and possibly implement this in our own district?****

Article link: <http://www.today.com/parents/want-kids-listen-more-fidget-less-try-more-recess-school-t65536>

A. We are aware of this program developed by TCU and are researching it further.

Walker Creek

- 10. Art is no longer being offered to any special education classrooms. The mission of our Education system is "no child is left behind." Not offering art to the special education children is leaving some children behind, discriminating against a certain group of children. There may be a safety concern for the art teacher, but there are options. Have these options been researched or tried?**

1. Always require an EA in the room with the Art Teacher.
2. Always require the teacher in the room with the Art Teacher.
3. Always require a BF in the room with the Art Teacher.

Art gives special needs students a way to express their feelings that are other times hard for them. Sometimes this is their only escape from school, even if it is only once a six weeks. Art is sometimes their only way to feel successful in school, or in life in general. **Taking away art from them sets them up for failure, don't you agree?**

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Walker Creek (continued)

- A. Students who receive special education services in one of our specialized programs are still eligible to attend art as appropriate. The only service that was changed was a separate section exclusive to the specialized program. This step was taken primarily because the EAs who conduct the art program do not have the capacity to “fit in” a section just for these programs. Students who are capable, both with and without support, should be included to the fullest extent possible with the appropriate grade level sections of the art program.

The nature of the programs at WCE are designed to help a student develop behaviors that allow increasing levels of access to the general curriculum. This would include art but when art is appropriate is a decision to be based on the individual student's performance level.

West Birdville

- 11. Do you think that our schedule will be any different now that we have HB 2610? I am referring to the minimum number of minutes per year portion of this House Bill.**

- A. Currently, there are no plans to change the minutes per day. We are working with area districts to review what their practices are and how they plan on implementing HB 2610.

- 12. If the district wants all teachers to keep their 30-hour GT certification it would be a good idea to provide more trainings. Can we have personal training face-to-face instead?**

- A. The initial 30 hours of training for teachers who serve identified gifted and talented students is a state requirement. In the past, BISD has collaborated with five other school districts to bring four days of face-to-face professional development to our teachers during a summer conference. The six collaborating districts, including BISD, would each contribute to the funds to bring relevant GT professional learning to our teachers. This meant each district only received a limited number of seats which caused anxiety among many of our new hires when they could not get in to the training. Because of tight budgets and some of the collaborating districts going to a different professional learning format, summer 2015 was the last year for the four-day face-to-face conference. Without the funds from other districts and limited GT staff to provide the training, Birdville ISD chose to use TAGT On-Demand as the format for teachers to obtain their 30 initial hours and six-hour update. This allows teachers to schedule their own PD during a time convenient for them.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Haltom Middle

13. Since the fine art programs in our elementary schools have proven so successful and beneficial to our population, what chance is there that our district will hire an art teacher for each campus?

- A. The District implemented the current elementary art rotation to provide students exposure to visual arts and provide PLC time for teachers. Administration re-evaluates our staffing plan on a yearly basis. Based on the data received, decisions for raises and additional staff are based on the financial resources available.

North Richland

14. Is Birdville ever going to have a professional development training center like the Pat May Center in the H-E-B school district?

- A. Such a facility would really serve our professional learning needs. No doubt, teachers and administrators need a place that truly accommodates adult and digital learning requirements for today's schools. Currently, our bond does not address a professional development training center. This is something that would need to be approved by our Board of Trustees and superintendent and would require a funding source.

Watauga Middle

15. As the responsibilities and roles of facilitators at the middle school level continue to grow, is there a possibility that the stipend will be increased to be reflective of the amount of work involved in the position? The stipend for spirit club at the middle school level is double that of content facilitators. Facilitators spend considerable time guiding grade level PLCs, managing campus site based funds, participating in data analysis for all grade levels of content (not just those they teach), disseminating information from the district to their department and making sure that initiatives and tasks required by the campus and the district are being completed in a timely matter. We plan, organize and implement scheduling and activities for our STAAR content review "bootcamps." As veteran teachers, we act as mentors to provide assistance and guidance to teachers new to our department. We analyze campus common assessments for all grade levels to insure appropriate depth and complexity. We participate in district Leaders of Learners as well as our campus leadership team. Very often, these tasks occupy the bulk of our conference time for more than one day a week, which leads to more of our individual work being taken home and done on the evenings and weekends. Our stipend is 500.00 a year – less than 50.00 per pay period. Spirit Club receives 1000.00 and we have seen them participate in one pep rally this year. This seems to send the wrong message about where our priorities are in providing the best education possible for our students.

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 8, 2016

MIDDLE SCHOOL (Continued)

Watauga Middle (continued)

- A. When Dr. Brown came to BISD, middle schools did not pay stipends to department heads. It soon became a priority to add stipends for these positions. Each year, Administration reviews stipends and when possible and/or appropriate adjustments are made. Because of budget constraints, increasing stipends at the middle school level had to be cut from the 2015–16 budget. It will be considered again in the development of the 2016–17 budget. As a point of clarification, spirit club sponsor stipends are paid by the Fine Arts Department.