

Superintendent's Communications Council

Campus Questions

February 3, 2014

ELEMENTARY

Academy at C.F. Thomas

1. **How are the academic coaches assisting classroom teachers in improving Tier 1 instruction?**

A: The reading and math coaches are available to work with teachers in a variety of ways. Classroom observation and/or model teaching, participating in PLCs to provide feedback, and conducting training on district initiatives or best practices are just a few of the things they can do to support teachers. They meet with principals to determine the campus needs, and teachers may request support services from them at any time. Their role is to provide support that will help teachers maximize their instructional practices so that Tier 1 instruction is at the level it should be.

2. **Since we are required to get six hours of GT credit every year, can the district meet that requirement on one of the scheduled professional development days instead of teachers having to get the hours in the summer or after school?**

A: This can be addressed by the Professional Learning Council. Since the days are designated for district initiatives, it will not always be possible to include GT sessions. It is always the intent to provide as many opportunities as possible during the year for teachers to earn the annual update, including online courses.

Hardeman

3. **What is the rationale for not providing individual classroom teachers with a printer and ink?**

A: There are multiple reasons for not having printers in classrooms:

1. **Cost** – The district does not have funding to provide printers in classrooms. We are well behind financially concerning computer replacement. That is where dollars must go first. Shared laser printers are much more efficient and cost effective.
2. **Secure printing** – Before the end of this year, we will be implementing secure printing to Canon copiers. You will be able to send a print job from your computer to the Canon copier at your campus and then go to the copier at your convenience, type in a code, and receive your printout at that moment. Middle and elementary schools are receiving a second copier to make this service more convenient.
3. **Moving to digital content** – We print over 32 million copies in the district annually. That is well beyond the norm. Most districts are moving to instruction where students receive their lessons and provide responses completely online. There is no need for printed materials in those scenarios. This is the direction education is going. Currently, we are very short on classroom technology to accomplish this. If the bond had passed in May 2013, we would

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

already have this technology in place. We are currently presenting requests to the Cabinet to receive funding from the Board for more classroom technology to do this. Projectors are being ceiling-mounted in all schools this year to further facilitate this.

Mullendore

4. **Would it be possible to set up Istation so that students are NOT being tested at the first of each month?** When that time falls on the first week back after a holiday break (as it did after Thanksgiving and after Christmas), students, especially those in the primary grades, are not ready for testing. It would be much more beneficial if the students could practice on Istation for a week before testing rather than having to do On Demand Assessments afterward.

A: Istation sets the windows for progress monitoring, and currently it happens the first time a student logs in each month. We can certainly let them know this request, but we will be bound by their program guidelines. If it is something that can be adjusted without affecting the integrity of the program, perhaps they will consider it.

5. **Is the district looking into purchasing a program, such as Think Through Math, for K-2 to use in addition to using Xtramath?**

A: Yes. The math coordinators and coaches are currently reviewing products to find more robust resources for math. We hope to have those in place at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Compass Odyssey has elementary courses, but we are currently only using it for secondary. We will be looking into the possibility of expanding it to elementary at some point.

North Ridge

6. **With the safety and security being of the utmost importance, why, during our snow days, do the Buildings and Grounds crews have to come in and work?**

A: No employee is ever expected to come to work if they cannot do so safely. However, those Buildings and Grounds workers that are able to come to work on those days are critical to preparing a safe environment for the return of teachers and students. We have received numerous notes from campus staff expressing their appreciation for the fact that when they returned to campus they found parking lots and sidewalks clear of ice and buildings that were appropriately heated and ready to accommodate students.

Porter

7. Periodically, rumors circulate throughout the district regarding cut backs in the number of educational assistants or even complete elimination of assistant positions across the district. Normally these are unfounded, although we have lost some educational assistant positions in the past as a result of budget shortages, etc. A new rumor recently surfaced regarding elimination of educational assistant positions in the district. **Is there any foundation to this rumor at this time? If so, are there details available about the extent of the cuts and the district's plan to serve students in their absence?**

A: There is no foundation to this rumor.

ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Spicer

8. Rosetta Stone is provided for non-English speaking students to use when they first start school in the USA in BISD. With the influx of French-speaking students from Africa that are enrolling at Spicer, it would be useful if the district would provide Rosetta Stone to the teachers to learn some basic French to help these students with basic things at school.

Would this be possible?

A: We do not offer Rosetta Stone any longer. We have switched programs to something more academic called DynEd. Our funding does not currently allow us to provide these resources for adults/teachers.

9. **Would you give us an update on any plans for another Bond initiative?**

A: At the January 23 meeting, the Board contracted to do an updated and complete report on all of our facilities. Once that work is done, it could be used by a future bond committee. Though no final decision has been made at this time, the earliest BISD would try another bond election is November 2014.

Stowe

10. **Are there any plans to provide an aide to the 4-year-old pre-K classes?**

A: We will discuss this with principals in their next meeting, and if they request it, add it to our list of competing personnel requests for next year.

MIDDLE

Haltom Middle

11. **Why was bereavement leave taken out of benefits?**

A: Bereavement leave has not been removed. The employee handbook states:

BEREAVEMENT (FUNERAL) LEAVE (P. 39)

Use of state leave and/or local sick leave for death in the immediate family shall not exceed five workdays per occurrence.

IMMEDIATE FAMILY (P. 37)

The term “immediate family” is defined as:

1. Spouse;
2. Son or daughter, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, a son- or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands *in loco parentis*;
3. Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands *in loco parentis* to the employee;
4. Sibling, stepsibling, and sibling-in-law; and
5. Grandparent and grandchild;
6. Any person residing in the employee’s household at the time of illness or death.

MIDDLE (Continued)

Haltom Middle (continued)

For purposes of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the definitions of spouse, parent, son or daughter and next of kin are found in DECA (LEGAL).

The term “family emergency” shall be limited to disasters and life-threatening situations involving the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family.

Smithfield Middle

12. Textbook adoption is in process, but there have been major changes with how the state is funding and it seems like the greater burden now falls on the school district. Please provide a summary of what has happened with textbook (including ancillaries) funding and what we can expect this means for our district. **Are there possible alternative avenues of funding for textbooks and the many other elements that support new textbooks?**

A: We believe we will have adequate Instructional Materials Allotment to fund the purchase of the needed textbooks and ancillaries for next year. Because the old technology funding has been rolled into this allotment, there is added pressure to fully fund technology needs.

13. As we look ahead to 2014/15 and the impact of TEKS moving up and down with additional TEKS being added to grade level curriculum; **what is the thinking about having Pre-AP Math grade 7 continue to take the grade 8 STAAR?** The STAAR test for math grade 8 comes three weeks earlier than grade 7 math STAAR which along with the challenges of leading these students to master two grade levels of math, shortens the preparation time before testing..

A: We will continue to do what the state recommends. However, the Commissioner of Education is reviewing the state’s current standard and is expected to make a final ruling on that standard soon.

The math coordinator and math specialist are looking at this issue very carefully to see if our current practice should be revised. They will be seeking input from teachers and administrators in advance of making any new recommendations. That should be happening in the next few weeks so that we can make preparations and communicate any changes that may be made.