

Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 11, 2013

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

1. **It has become clear that jobs posted with a "closing date" are being filled long before that date. Why is this?** Some openings are never "posted" at all. How can this be remedied so that more qualified people may apply creating a larger pool of candidates?
 - A. We are not aware of this taking place on either the jobs filled prior to the closing date or not posted at all. Can you provide a specific example?
2. **Will EA salaries be reviewed soon and brought up to national averages?** (\$21,607 1st year aide/\$24,280 Nat'l mean average - per 09/12 statistics)
 - A. EA salaries are based on recommendations from the Texas Association of School Boards and local market values. BISD salaries are not based on the national average.

Binion

3. **Will there be any training for teachers during the summer besides reading academy?**
 - A. Yes, directors and coordinators are currently working on finalizing all the training that will be offered for teachers from March 1 – August 15. A spreadsheet with that information will be made available to principals by the end of February, and sessions will be loaded into Workshop shortly after that. There will be a variety of options so there is quality professional learning available for every teacher in the district.
4. **Will the curriculum previews provide some demonstration in how to present a lesson on specific standards?**
 - A. This request will be forwarded to the curriculum coordinators so that they may include this information at future curriculum previews and/or professional learning sessions. In addition, the coordinators are willing to meet with grade level teams to model lessons based on a standard if needed. Principals may request this service of any of the coordinators. Teachers who have already become adept at teaching from a standard on your campus are also great resources to work with PLCs to hone this skill.

Cheney

5. **With the new math TEKS coming in the next two years, is the state allocating funds for a new math textbook adoption? If not, will BISD make any changes to the current math curriculum?**
 - A. New math textbooks are included in the state textbook proclamation for 2013, and it is our hope that the Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA) money is included in the education budget when the legislature meets. If there are no funds available for new resources, BISD staff will continue the practice of researching available resources to find those that will supplement the current adoption. If there are math standards that are not currently supported by the resources we have at this time, we will make sure that those needs are addressed in the most appropriate manner.

Foster Village

6. In the upcoming legislative session, it is our hope that at least half of the money we lost last time will be restored. This would mean getting approximately \$150/child back. We have been told that, should that happen, a raise in teacher salaries will be looked at first and foremost. **What will happen if *none* of the money is restored? Will teacher salaries remain the same?**
 - A. The budget process is in the very early stages at this point. However, the administration and board are considering salary increases for next year.
7. PLCs and curriculum previews have resulted in the conclusion that the 4th and 5th grade math Scope and Sequence is unevenly distributed throughout the varying 6-weeks. Sometimes there are too many concepts paired together that do not “mesh” well, and other times there are too few concepts per 6-Weeks. **What are the consultants doing to alleviate this issue? Are there other administrative staff members that review the consultant’s work when issues like this arise, or is it up to the teachers to contact the consultants directly?**
 - A. As everyone is aware, all schools in Texas are in a transition cycle to the new math standards. As a result, there have been several changes in the scope and sequence of every grade level. During the transition cycle, teachers and coordinators have been tasked to ensure that students are prepared for both the STAAR test given on the old standards and the STAAR test that will reflect the new standards that will be given next year. This has no doubt proven problematic for both campus and district staff. The coordinators have worked with facilitators and curriculum writing teams to provide appropriate alignment of the standards to meet the expectations. In addition to peer review by math teachers from across the district, our coordinators network with their peers in other districts and with TEA staff to maintain the integrity of the curriculum. It is our expectation that teachers will always notify the appropriate coordinator when a curriculum concern arises so that it can be addressed in a timely manner. A new feedback process is being designed currently that will be available for all teachers to review and to provide their own feedback. Once established, we are confident that this new form will be a useful tool for teachers and coordinators to use to gather immediate information about their content/grade level curriculum.

Green Valley/Hardeman/Porter

8. (We inquired about this before.) **Can CBAs be given a two week window to be administered instead of 5 days?** As elementary teachers, we lose almost a week of teaching when we must give 5 tests in 5 days. Accommodations have to be made for those students that require them, which means our special education and support staff lose valuable teaching time as well. Multiple tests in one day is not a desired option. Although the tests are somewhat short, they still require quite a bit of time and a quiet testing environment. As we stated last time, we are questioning the validity of the tests especially at the end of the week when the kids seem to be “tested out.” We feel the data is not very reliable or even useful at this point.
 - A. *Response from a similar question in December:* The testing calendar was recommended by the Assessment Council and subsequently approved by Cabinet. The Council specifically discussed the appropriateness of a one-week window for elementary. In light of the fact that the CBAs were relatively short assessments to be administered within a 45-minute time period they determined that one week should provide ample time to administer four tests without undue stress to students. This concern will be taken to the Council for consideration when planning the 2013-14 calendar.
9. **Can CBAs be administered at any other time rather than the last week of a six weeks?** See above, but again we give common assessment (six weeks tests) the last week: Math, Reading and Science.
 - A. Feedback from the administration of the January CBAs will be taken into account by the Assessment Council in the development of the district testing calendar for 2013-14.

North Ridge

10. The elementary coordinators have emphasized how the CBAs are to be used as a teaching tool. With that said, **can we possibly receive one copy per subject as a “teaching tool” instead of losing five hours of instructional time administering them?**
 - A. The primary function of the CBAs is to provide data to the Curriculum and Instruction department to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. In addition, CBA results and the test items may be analyzed by PLCs to help teachers calibrate their instruction and common assessments to the district curriculum. In order to serve the primary function of CBAs, the district controls the security of the tests by asking test coordinators to collect test booklets within two weeks of the administration window. It is during this time that PLCs may make use of the test items to perform their analysis and calibration. While it is acceptable for teachers to redistribute tests to students for the purpose of discussing the results, this is not one of the primary uses of CBAs.
11. **Are there plans to roll out any more new programs or systems next year** (like Forethought, Aware, RtI, Aesop, INOVA, etc.)?
 - A. No. However, there will be new learning for many of our new initiatives. For instance, not all teachers have been trained in Aware or INOVA. Also, those that have received training may not know all of the various functionalities of these two systems. So, we will have more in-depth training beyond the initial introduction. The same will be true for Forethought.

Smithfield

12. In the past we have had initiative after initiative only to move on when something new and exciting came along. We are excited about the current initiatives and the core work that we are doing. **Are there plans to continue our foundational work? And is there a plan for the district to stop doing things that we do not believe in or are not beneficial to students?**

A. We have made a commitment to teaching to a standards-based curriculum, using data to focus and connect instruction, intervening appropriately when students experience difficulty, and working collaboratively to continuously improve teaching and learning. Also, we are committed to making literacy/reading a district-wide emphasis. I don't know what things Birdville ISD does that one might consider to be unbeneficial to students. If you know of anything specific, please make that known and we will certainly respond. Without knowing the specifics, I really can't address this concern. However, we are serious about staying the course and working to build strong support systems so that our students are successful.

13. **Are there plans to have full-time APs on every campus?**

A. Administration added 3.5 administrator positions to insure that every campus had at least one half-time AP last year. At this time, there are no plans to increase administrative staff.

Snow Heights

14. We understand that Dr. Brown has stated that school security is of the utmost importance in BISD. Given recent national and local events and the resulting concerns over school security, **could you outline what BISD is planning with regard to increased security measures on our elementary and secondary campuses and a time frame that is envisioned for the implementation of such measures?**

A. We are reviewing the current security system for all campuses. We are giving particular attention to front door security. Though some changes will be made during the current school year, significant changes will be made during the summer to minimize disruption to campuses. There are additional safety enhancements for every campus in the proposed bond proposal.

Stowe

15. **Why aren't we able to move the temperature on the thermostat?** With the thermostat set at 72, the rooms are getting very cold all day.

A. By district policy, thermostats are fixed at 72 degrees. When that setting results in an uncomfortable learning environment, we encourage teachers to report their concerns to the campus administrator who should forward those concerns to the Building and Grounds department for investigation and possible adjustment. The Building and Grounds department has the ability and authority to reset individual thermostats as needed.

Stowe (Continued)

16. Why are the CBAs not spread out like the TEKS CHEKS were?

- A. When the assessment council met last spring to create the calendar for the year, there was an overwhelming sentiment that we needed to do fewer assessments that were shorter in length so that there would not be as big an impact on the instructional calendar. The number of CBAs was reduced from 4 to 3, and the number of items was reduced so that most students should be able to complete them within one class period. Because curriculum development in all the core content areas is on the same cycle, it made sense to schedule the CBAs within a reasonable timeframe of each other.

The Assessment Council met recently, and this concern was discussed. Consideration is being given to spreading them out over a longer time period and/or reducing some of the other assessment expectations, especially during the weeks immediately after the December break. It is the responsibility of the Council to consider all options when building the assessment calendar. The final product should be one that provides the data that both campuses and the district need to make instructional decisions in the most timely manner. That is a difficult balance to achieve, and this type of questioning helps that group in the decision-making process.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Haltom

17. Because of recent events will we have armed security officers on our campuses again and if so when?

- A. We currently have armed police officers on our high school campuses and unarmed security guards on our middle school campuses. The Board is reviewing security scenarios for middle school and elementary campuses to determine appropriate modifications for the 2013-14 school year.

North Richland

18. Why was the grade cut-off moved from Monday at 11:59 p.m. to the Friday that ends the six weeks at 4:00 p.m.? This actually forces teachers to get 3 major grades into a period of 4.5 weeks to allow for grading and retesting, which can be difficult to do.

- A. There was a request from some secondary counselors to consider this change because of the need to make schedule changes for the second semester. When the change was made it was based on information that indicated all secondary campuses had provided input. This question will be taken into consideration when determining the cutoff times at the end of the second semester.

19. **Can the middle school kids have a Shannon High School type school program?** Maybe we can save those kids who need more one on one attention or who are too old to be in middle school but are not ready for High School. I believe that waiting until high school is too late for a lot of these kids and they end up dropping out.
- A. This concept is currently being studied by a committee to see about the possibility of Shannon taking over-age middle school students. Other than the added expense of staff, one of the major constraints is space. Greg Farr is researching what it would take in terms of staff and space to implement a program that would address students that are currently at the middle school but really should be at the high school based upon their age. We all concur that there is a need.

Watauga Middle

20. **How/when can we expect the district to remove elections from our schools?** In light of our focus on student safety and recent events, opening our doors for elections seems like an open invitation for people wanting easy access to our campuses. Surely there are alternatives, public libraries for one, to having elections on our school grounds.
- A. The district is looking at providing additional office staff during elections to help monitor community traffic on campuses.
21. Has anyone looked into the number of 8th grade “on-level” students scoring “below” on the reading portion of the EXPLORE tests? **Is there any possibility we could add reading classes to the eighth-grade curriculum?** (Students would then have a reading and a writing class in 8th grade causing them to lose an elective in most cases, but it could be a great long term investment resulting in improved ACT scores in the long run. I am asking for consideration for this for on-level students.)
- A. We are currently looking at all the types of interventions and/or classes that need to be added at the middle school for students experiencing difficulty in the four core areas. Also, we know that reading/literacy is a major challenge and one that we need to address. Our intent is to establish commonality in all middle schools so that we can actually conduct a program evaluation across the system. Our principals will be involved in that discussion. As a district, we need to identify the Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions at middle school and know what the staffing and resource requirements are in order to adequately and appropriately address the learning needs of students.

22. **In light of recent events, could the glass for attendance clerks at Haltom be replaced with bulletproof glass?**
- A. We are reviewing the current security system for all campuses. We are giving particular attention to front door security. Though some changes will be made during the current school year, significant changes will be made during the summer to minimize disruption to campuses. Bulletproof glass for attendance clerks is not currently part of our plan.
23. **Can we go back to the 6-daily grade requirement?** It is very difficult, particularly in AP classes, to get 8 MEANINGFUL daily grades each six weeks.
- A. The office of Staff and Student Services is forming a committee to evaluate our grading and reporting practices. The committee consists of a teacher and administrator from each campus. They will make recommendations for any changes that need to be made in current policy.
24. **Can we revisit the semester exam before Christmas policy?** It makes it difficult to get a solid assessment of what students have learned during the entire semester, since there is still material left to cover. Additionally, it has complicated the semester-only classes, as students seem to think that they have been finished for two weeks already. I know the argument was that they still have assignments and tests these last two weeks of the semester to keep them accountable, but they have mentally checked-out regardless.
- A. After surveying our secondary principals, they feel the semester exam schedule prior to Christmas worked well. At this time, they are pleased with the results.