

SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

February 13, 2012

?	#	CAMPUS	QUESTION
		ELEMENTARY	
1.		ACFT	<p>Q. Does BISD plan to implement a uniform, district-wide lesson planning template?</p> <p>A. The district is transitioning to a curriculum management system that will integrate all of our key resources into one system. This would include the integration of CCO, Moodle, EdSoft, ERO, PDAS, etc. This will enable the district to create an electronic lesson plan template common to all campuses.</p>
2.		ACFT	<p>Q. What is the reason vocational classes for learning disabled students can't begin earlier than 16 years old or in 10th grade?</p> <p>A. Students in special education are required by law to take all courses required of a general education student. Even students with our most profound disabilities (SELF classes) must earn the same number of credits and in the same subjects as any student in general education. (However, many of these students graduate through the minimum high school plan and are only required to take three years of math and three years of science.) Additionally, some of the career tech classes require students to be in the 10th grade or age 16. Career/tech classes are most often elective classes and students do not have room for many electives until they are juniors or seniors.</p>
3.		ACFT	<p>Q. Does BISD have a program in place, or a plan to put in place, that will/does aid teachers in obtaining their master's degree, such as financial aid, sabbatical, or an in-district program?</p> <p>A. BISD has a website to provide information to staff concerning additional educational opportunities (http://schools.birdvilleschools.net/domain/2837). The district does not provide financial support to staff who want to continue their education.</p> <p>After completing three years of continuous service, an employee shall be eligible for one year unpaid leave of absence for purposes of study in an institution of higher education. Such leave shall be granted with the understanding that upon return, the individual will be subject to reassignment of position, and entitled to such compensation as the position to which such person is assigned normally or currently carries. Return to duty will be contingent upon there being a vacancy for which the individual qualifies.</p> <p>Source: BISD Employee Handbook</p>
4.		ACFT	<p>Q. Is there any way teachers can get more quality time to spend in lesson preparation and to reflect on, learn, and implement the training we receive?</p> <p>A. As Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on the campuses become more adept in their work, it is an expectation that time spent in collaborating with peers will provide sufficient opportunity for preparation, reflection and learning. At the district level, the Curriculum & Instruction (C & I) staff is developing training and researching the best resources for designing a work environment such as is requested in the question. Being able to maximize whatever time is available for planning is a learned skill, and the C & I staff are working to provide learning for teachers across the district.</p>

? #	CAMPUS	QUESTION
ELEMENTARY (Continued)		
5.	Binion	<p>Q. <i>What are the expectations for summer school? What age groups will be served and how many teachers will be hired?</i></p> <p>A. Final plans are being made for Summer School 2012 and will be communicated as soon as they are approved. Credit recovery and acceleration (with tuition) will be available for secondary students, and remediation prior to retesting for all students who fail one or more EOC will be designed and offered. There will be minimal district programs available [for elementary students] that are geared toward supporting academic success in 2012-13 for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. It is uncertain the number of staff positions that will be needed at this time. It is expected that the summer school plan will be announced this month, February.</p>
6.	Birdville/ACFT	<p>Q. <i>What will it take to bring about the realization, to the powers that decide, that Response to Intervention (RTI) documentation takes time away from good teaching?</i></p> <p>A. There are federal and state requirements for RTI documentation over which the district has no control. However, we are well aware of the increasing amount expected of each campus. The ELA and math consultants, along with the lead BRAVO teacher, work with reading and math specialists in the district to create the documents that we use. They review the documents each year and revise/edit as needed. They have tried to meet the intent of the requirements with as little impact on classroom instruction time as possible. There will probably be a survey in the spring to get feedback from teachers about RTI. Any suggestions that teachers have that would make the district procedures more manageable will definitely be considered for implementation in the future. Without additional staffing, this issue will be a challenge. Maintaining a focus on procedures that will have a positive impact on student success should be our goal. If that is our focus, the time required for documentation will have been well spent.</p>
7.	Birdville/ACFT	<p>Q. <i>Can we get a team together that can make smart board math tools to use in the classroom?</i></p> <p>A. The instructional technology specialists (ITS) and content consultants work collaboratively with curriculum writing teams to create and revise curriculum based on the state standards. It is an expectation that instructional resources, including the most current technology, be added to Curriculum Central Online (CCO) each year. Smart Board strategies that support the content curriculum have been, and will continue to be, added on a regular basis. It is important that teachers check CCO regularly to review new additions.</p>
8.	Green Valley	<p>Q. <i>Can BISD organize long-term planning by grade level during the summer to give all grade-level teachers an opportunity to work together in planning and organizing the upcoming year?</i></p> <p>A. The C & I staff will consider this recommendation when designing future meeting schedules. Meetings with facilitators have been reduced in number at the request of principals to keep those teachers in classrooms instructing students. Long-term planning in the summer might be a viable option to previous facilitator meetings that required teachers to be off campus several times each year.</p>

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)		
9.	Green Valley	<p>Q. Why is the STAAR benchmark or district benchmark not correlated with what we know is going to be on there? (Larger fonts, numbered paragraphs [3rd grade])</p> <p>A. The reading test used Verdana 12 (STAAR-specified), and the paragraphs were numbered. Some of the science and social studies passages were not numbered, but the questions did not refer students back to a numbered paragraph in order to respond. The font was smaller than 12 in some cases, but that is because the selected passage was pulled from another source in that size. Such differences in font and font size are consistent with prior TAKS tests, so the assumption was that leaving the passages as printed would be appropriate.</p> <p>The C & I and assessment staffs have made an effort to correct some of these issues on the snapshots that will be given in March, but there will probably still be some variation in font size on the science and social studies tests. The May snapshot will not include lengthy reading passages, and all the items should be in one font/font size on that assessment.</p>
10.	Hardeman	<p>Q. Are there or will there be any consequences placed on schools that are not following guidelines for spending the specified amount of time teaching each subject? What plans do we have to ensure every school is teaching and covering the material we are responsible for?</p> <p>A. There are only suggested time guidelines for each content area, not required. More specific curriculum monitoring via walk-throughs, assessment data and teacher input will enable the C & I staff to identify systemic concerns. Once identified, those concerns will be addressed with training and other support to assist those who struggle with pacing. Also, identifying systemic concerns provides the staff information needed to adjust the written curriculum where needed.</p>
11.	Holiday Heights	<p>Q. Why are district employees (B&G employees) who have trouble in one location moved to another location instead of being dismissed?</p> <p>A. This is handled on a case-by-case basis. This is a personnel matter and specifics on an individual can't be discussed. However, if there are particular concerns, please contact Joe Cammarata, associate superintendent for staff and student services, at 817-547-5714.</p>
12.	Mullendore	<p>Q. How was the decision for the new calendar made since we weren't given a chance to vote?</p> <p>A. The ultimate decision on setting the school calendar is made by the Board of Trustees. Prior to their vote, BISD took comments in November 2011 on the three calendars prepared by the calendar committee. The district communicated it was accepting comments on the proposed 2012-13 calendar in the e-nlightened, B-News, on the front of the website, and on our facebook, twitter and the blog pages. Based on the comments received, a recommendation was made to the Board.</p> <p>The following was posted in the e-nlightened, B-News, on the front of the website, and on our facebook, twitter and the blog pages.</p> <p>Due to the restraints of the calendar for 2012-13, graduation will occur prior to the last day of school. Graduating seniors will take exams prior to May 26 and will not be required to attend after May 24.</p>

Commented [IU1]: Since the sentence is about consequences (plural) I think it should be "Are"

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12. Mullendore (cont'd)

The 2012-13 Calendar Committee has created three calendar options to be reviewed by community, staff, parents, and students. Each calendar has slight differences related to holidays and professional learning days for teachers.

Please review the following calendars and keep in mind that the following requirements must be met when offering alternative suggestions.

Texas Education Code 25.0811: First day of instruction. (a) A school district may not begin instruction for students for a school year before the fourth Monday in August unless the district operates a year-round system under Section 25.085.

- 2012 Start Date – August 27, 2012 (fourth Monday)
- 2013 Graduation Date – May 26, 2013
- 175 days of instruction for students
- State Waiver for five professional learning days that must occur after Aug. 27 and before the last day of instruction. (If we decrease these days, we have to increase student instructional days. Instructional days + State Waiver days must equal 180 days)
- Total 187 work days for campus staff
- Four professional learning days prior to the start of school (These are different from the state waiver days.)
- Three staff work days (prior to the start of school and/or during the school year)
- Two inclement weather make-up days (second semester)
- Holidays/Break
 - * Labor Day
 - * Thanksgiving
 - * Christmas
 - * Martin Luther King Day
 - * Spring Break
 - * Memorial Day

13. Mullendore

Q. *What is the schedule or is there a plan to update the desktop computers across the district?*

A. The district has a plan for updating and replacing computers. However, that plan is dated and does not necessarily reflect current needs. The district has just hired a new Executive Director of Technology Information Management Systems (TIMS). He will evaluate, update and develop a strategy for implementing and funding the new plan. The district hopes to have a new plan in place by the start of the next school year.

14. Mullendore

Q. *Why is district technology not provided equitably across the district?*

A. The administration is aware of the inequities across the district and will work with the new Executive Director of TIMS to evaluate ways to address this issue. This will be a fundamental issue as we develop the budget for next year, and as we plan for future bond referendums.

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)		
15.	North Ridge	<p>Q. <i>In looking at our calendars, is it possible to have a half day on December 21, 2012?</i></p> <p>A. In the past, half days prior to a holiday were used for semester exams. Since we are not testing, the district would need to justify the reason for having a half day of instruction. The Cabinet is happy to receive input with justification why it would be in the best interest of students to take a half day prior to an extended holiday break.</p>
16.	North Ridge	<p>Q. <i>Would it be possible in the future to have a volunteer school pilot a program such as the change in first-grade report cards where these things can be fixed before going district-wide?</i></p> <p>A. The first-grade report card is in its fourth or fifth year of implementation, and there were three schools that did pilot it before other campuses began using it. The specific technology issues mentioned will be shared with TIMS staff to find out if there is a solution available in Skyward Gradebook. Mike DePaola and the other TIMS staff who work on Skyward have done an outstanding job of working with the report card committee to be proactive on as many of the details as possible, and they continue to find solutions to the individual issues that arise each six weeks.</p> <p>The consultants have been, and will continue, working with the report card committee to design grading rubrics based on the standards that teachers can use to assist them in determining student performance on a standards-based report card. Individual teams are also collaborating on grading so that the report cards reflect consistency across the district. As we work through the process district-wide this year, collect data from surveys this spring, and continue the work of the report card committee, we are confident that the product will be one of quality that will communicate to parents what their children have learned.</p>
17.	North Ridge	<p>Q. <i>In regards to web pages, would it be possible in the future to make changes after the system has been tested and proven to be operating properly for the needs of the school district?</i></p> <p>A. BISD evaluated several products before selecting Schoolwires as the software package to develop and maintain campus and department websites. Schoolwires provides an extensive online knowledge base, which includes short training videos, to help users better understand the functionality of the product. The upgrade that took place during the summer of 2011 had been tested by the company and several school districts prior to BISD making the conversion. However, as with any upgrade, there can be glitches in the system. If you find a glitch, please provide details to the communications department so they can pass them on to the appropriate person at Schoolwires.</p> <p>Schoolwires has focused their next release on improving and resolving editor-related defects. The tentative release date is the end of March.</p>

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)		
18.	Smith/AWB	<p>Q. <i>What is your vision of the ideal school for elementary, middle and high schools as we go into the 21st century and what will the district work towards meeting this vision?</i></p> <p>A. Currently, we are collecting detailed information on each of our campuses. We will use the information collected to formulate a vision of what campuses in BISD should look like, including, but not limited to, campus size, streamlining efficiency through possible consolidation of smaller campuses, boundary changes, staffing recommendations, services provided, etc. The results of this work may be the basis for a future bond referendum.</p>
19.	Smithfield	<p>Q. <i>Is it possible for the elementary schools to have a half day each semester so teachers can schedule parent conferences?</i></p> <p>A. It is possible to have that time for parent conferences, but it would be contingent on calendar and budget constraints.</p>
20.	Smithfield	<p>Q. <i>What are the thoughts about adding assistant principals to each campus full time?</i></p> <p>A. This is being considered. However, adding administrative staff positions is difficult during these financial times.</p>
21.	Spicer	<p>Q. <i>What is the district policy/process of evaluating curriculum-related programs such as "Investigations" for effectiveness within the campus student population to determine whether or not they are continued? Are there thoughts about possibly incorporating other methods such as "Marcy Cook Math"?</i></p> <p>A. "Investigations," along with "Envisions," have been the primary resources for elementary mathematics instruction since they were adopted four years ago. That being the case, it has never been the intent that teachers not be allowed to use other viable resources to teach the written curriculum. There are other recommended resources that teachers have access to in Curriculum Central Online (CCO) that support the state mathematics standards, and teachers are encouraged to use them. Training conducted by Marcy Cook has been recommended in Birdville for many years, and certainly any of the strategies she advocates that support the state standards would be acceptable. The scope and sequence of the math curriculum has been adjusted several times to meet the needs of BISD students, and we will continue that practice as long as the requested adjustments ensure adequate instruction to foster student success on the standards. Teachers are encouraged to share new resources with the math consultant for review and possible addition to CCO.</p>
22.	Stowe	<p>Q. <i>What are BISD views about year-round school?</i></p> <p>A. While this is allowable, at this point, the district does not have any indication that year-round school is the desire of our community.</p>
23.	Watauga/AWB	<p>Q. <i>Are there any plans for BISD to reinstate art teachers at the elementary campuses?</i></p> <p>A. Adding additional art teachers at the elementary level has been discussed. However, adding art teachers at the elementary level would have a significant financial impact on the district. Decisions for adding additional staff are based on the current financial restraints placed on BISD.</p>

? #	CAMPUS	QUESTION
MIDDLE SCHOOL		
24.	Haltom Middle	<p>Q. <i>How can the district justify the differences in stipends for high school coaches and middle school coaches?</i></p> <p>A. All stipends are evaluated each year. If you have specific concerns, please contact Joe Cammarata, associate superintendent for staff and students services, at 817-547-5714.</p>
25.	Haltom Middle	<p>Q. <i>What can be done to ensure the math curriculum being taught in our district is driven by the Texas State Standards?</i></p> <p>A. The district's math curriculum is based on the state standards. Each unit map in CCO identifies the specific TEKS being covered. The content consultants are on the same learning curve as many teachers regarding deconstructing student expectations, writing assessments based on that work, and using the resulting data to make informed curricular revisions. In anticipation of the initial STAAR/EOC exams, attention to readiness and supporting standards has been a key focus of curriculum revisions since last spring. As more information becomes available about the state assessments, more curriculum work will be completed. As they are completed, communication about the revisions will be forthcoming.</p>
26.	North Oaks	<p>Q. <i>In regards to the fall 2012 exam schedule, has the rationale for this decision been discussed on the school level, and why was it made so late in the semester? Is there any way this can be changed for future semesters?</i></p> <p>A. Designing the 2012-2013 Assessment Calendar will begin soon, and these concerns and recommendations will be considered before the final calendar is completed.</p>
27.	North Richland	<p>Q. <i>Is there a possibility that we could have a better process for recommending students for Pre-AP classes?</i></p> <p>A. Because BISD is "open access," we cannot set guidelines for participation in PreAP classes. There are no assessment or grade requirements for any student. It is incumbent on counselors, teachers and administrators at the elementary campuses to review the course choice sheets to see who requested the classes. They should then talk to the students and their parents about what is required in PreAP classes so that there are no surprises. They should not, however, tell students not to try the classes.</p> <p>The purpose of the PreAP courses is to prepare students for the rigor that is part of all AP courses. It is not expected that they be able to handle the rigor prior to taking the courses.</p>
28.	Watauga	<p>Q. <i>Could our district investigate the possibility of changing/altering our fall schedule in order to have semester exams prior to Christmas Break?</i></p> <p>A. This is being considered. The district is currently collecting principal input. In addition, the district is working to develop a common exam schedule for middle school campuses.</p>

Commented [IU3]: Is this the correct word for the sentence?

? # **CAMPUS**

QUESTION

HIGH SCHOOL

29. BCTAL

- Q.** *In an era where budgets are being cut in every area, do you feel like the investment in convocation has a significant enough impact on the staff to justify such an expense?*
- A.** It was important this year to allow the new superintendent to speak directly to the staff. However, we are evaluating options for how we can be more efficient with time and resources.