

Superintendent’s Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 7, 2013

ELEMENTARY

Academy at C.F. Thomas

- 1. What is the rationale behind the 10 minute recess when so much research shows how important free time is to young children’s social, emotional and physical development as well as enhancing their intellectual achievements?**

A:

K-3rd	Minutes	4th – 5th	Minutes
ELAR	150-180	ELAR	135-150
Math	60-90	Math	60-90
Science	45	Science	60
Social Studies	30	Social Studies	30
PE	30	PE	30
Music/Computer/ Library Rotation	30	Music/Computer/Library Rotation	30

The school day starts officially at 8:10 a.m. and ends at 3:25 p.m. This gives 7 hours and 15 minutes of time during the regular school day. A typical campus has an hour (60 minutes) of specials/rotations built into their day that includes music/library/PE and/or computer time. Each campus must give a 30-minute lunch period for the students, which may also include recess time. This leaves 5 hours and 45 minutes for instructional and intervention time. Most campuses utilize a built-in intervention time of 45 minutes leaving 5 hours (300 minutes) of instructional time.

7 hours 15 minutes
-1 hour for specials
 6 hours 15 minutes
-30 minutes for lunch
 5 hours 45 minutes
-45 minutes for intervention
 Time left: 5 hours or 300 minutes

Academy at C.F. Thomas (continued)

The minimum expectation for instructional time that was created by the district's instructional time task force is as follows:

K-3

ELAR = 150 minutes
Math = 60 minutes
Science = 45 minutes
Social Studies = 30 minutes
Total = 285

Five hours of instructional time = 300 minutes which would leave approximately 10 minutes for recess and 5 additional minutes to be incorporated into the day.

4-5

ELAR = 135 minutes
Math = 60 minutes
Science = 60 minutes
Social Studies = 30 minutes
Total = 285

It is the expectation during the instructional day that students will be given opportunities to interact socially with other students during group/partner activities. Also, lessons that incorporate movement increase the brain's effectiveness of adding the new learning into long-term memory. Since most campuses have PE on a daily basis, this allows for a minimum of 30-40 minutes of activity built into the day along with any additional opportunities created in an active learning environment.

2. Why were many elementary schools allowed to start with very overcrowded classes and then many other classes disrupted as teachers were pulled from already established classrooms and required to set up new classrooms at other schools?

A: There is no real way of knowing with complete accuracy the number of students that will report until school begins. Unfortunately, many parents don't register their child until late, some even after Labor Day. Also, some parents do not withdraw their child before school begins. All this impacts our decisions.

On the campus, principals can make grade level adjustments prior to the first day of school. However, central administration typically waits several days after school begins to see how the numbers settle in. We do not want to make changes prematurely. This year, we had to reassign three teachers plus add two additional teachers after school began. To put this into perspective, we made five changes out of 557 classrooms.

Foster Village

3. Classroom teachers are being given two hours every month to meet in PLCs at the district's expense. The elementary music teachers are interested in having PLC time throughout the year as well. **Would it be possible for these teachers to meet in PLCs on Campus Professional Development days?** Much of the material covered on these days is core subject oriented which makes it difficult to feel included in meetings. Meeting during Campus Professional Development days would allow us to focus on our own subject matter, align our curriculum across the district, and collaborate on research-based practices in music education at NO cost to the district.

A: This decision will need principal input. We will discuss this at the October principal's meeting. For the first professional development day on Oct. 11, there is a need for all staff to be on their campuses that day to participate in a survey.

4. With the introduction of math and reading interventionists on some campuses, there seems to be some confusion amongst teachers on which children the interventionists are to serve: **Students that failed STAAR? Tier 3 students? Students on the "bubble" of Tier 3? What if the number of failing students exceeds the number of students the interventionists say they can serve?**

A: The criteria for Tier placement is clearly stated on grade level procedure pages in the RtI Handbook. Interventionists serve Tier 3 students. If the number of Tier 3 students exceeds the number of students the interventionist can serve, the campus will determine how to prioritize students for Tier placement. Training participants will be given strategies for prioritizing students. The process for submitting questions related to RtI implementation will also be shared with teachers.

Green Valley

5. We would like some information about our raises. **We were told we would get \$1500 plus our step ... does that mean the step we should be on, since we haven't had raises in three years, or just one step up from where we are now?**

A: Teachers can find their 2013-14 base salary by accessing the [2013-14 Teacher Hiring Schedule](#) on the staff page on the district's website. You can determine your raise by subtracting your 2012-13 salary from your 2013-14 salary. If you need further clarification, please contact DeAnn Bass in Human Resources at 5739.

Green Valley/Spicer

6. **Is there a way the departments in the ad building can be open later than 4:15? It is hard to get to these places from our campus in time.**

A: We are evaluating having the main switchboard open from 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. beginning in January. However, if you will contact the appropriate departments, they will make arrangements to have someone come in early or stay late to help meet your needs. Please make these arrangements in advance.

Mullendore

7. **How is it physically and logistically possible for teachers to meet with all of our Tier kids for the required amount of time outside of the instruction period?**

A: The initial campus RtI training included suggestions for prioritizing students and maximizing intervention time. The suggestions included use of ASPIRE before and after school to meet required IStation and Think Through Math minutes. Realistically, the number of minutes required for each subject may have to be adjusted this year because of the high number of Tier 3 students. For example, the RtI Handbook requires 30 minutes of intervention 4-5 times per week for reading and math. A campus may only have the capacity to provide 20 minutes of daily intervention because of the high number of students. As Tier 1 instruction improves, the number of students on Tier 2 and Tier 3 will decline. If a campus needs assistance in designing an intervention schedule, the principal can send a request to Lorene Ownby, director of elementary education.

8. We love the information given in trainings but feel that it is stretched out in order to cover a given period of time. We feel that the information could be given in a half-day setting; then give us the rest of the day to collaborate, plan and prepare to implement what we have learned. **Could we possibly be given the information and then time to do what we need at our campuses to implement it?**

A: The goal of district professional learning is to give teachers information and the opportunity to collaborate about instructional strategies with grade level/content area peers from other campuses. Research supports the effectiveness of this model of professional learning. Teachers profit from opportunities to share ideas and strategies with a variety of professionals. The BISD professional learning calendar provides multiple days during which teachers can collaborate with their campus peers.

9. **Could curriculum trainings, such as Norma Jackson, Debbie Diller and Bea Luchin, and intervention trainings, such as Level Literacy Intervention (LLI), not only be offered over the summer, but also stipulated that it is a training that we will be required to have so that we have time to collaborate, plan and prepare BEFORE school starts?** We would prefer to attend a required training during the summer rather than spending hours preparing for a substitute and being away from instruction that our students desperately need from us. It would also save the district the cost of paying substitutes. We realize that most of the trainings were offered over the summer; however, it was not known that we would be required to attend until after school started. When we are given new strategies the week before school starts or after school starts, it feels as if we spend the rest of the year trying to get caught up because we started out so far behind.

A: Required trainings such as the ones mentioned in the questions are included in the professional learning plan in a 5-year cycle which should give everyone opportunity to complete them. Some of the trainings, however, had to be completed during the first weeks of school so that RtI intervention resources could be used. In most cases, vendors would not schedule the trainings until the Board approved the resource purchases at the July and August trustee meetings. Knowing that Title 1 professional

Mullendore (continued)

development allocations will likely be eliminated or greatly reduced after this year, the district asked principals to allow as many teachers as possible to be released from classrooms during the 2013-14 school year to participate so that most of them will have completed these sessions. Improving Tier 1 instruction is a district goal, and targeted professional learning will be an important component in making that possible. We understand the challenge associated with asking teachers to prepare for being out of their classrooms, and we will work to reduce the number of these requests. We are confident that the resulting changes in “first-time teaching” in BISD have been worth everyone’s effort.

North Ridge

10. We value and appreciate the extra time you allow us on our campus during preparation for a new school year. However, **is there a way that the years of service could still be displayed during convocation?**

A: We regret we were not able to finalize the list prior to this year’s convocation. However, we did highlight these individuals in the Sept. 13 e-nlightened. We hope to be able to do both in the future.

11. **Is the district going to be updating teacher and student computers to make them compatible with the new programs installed?** We are having difficulties opening our web mail from home.

A: We have already updated teacher computers from 1 gig of memory to 2 gig. This should suffice for all approved software applications, although some may be slow. We are now working on adding memory to classroom and lab computers.

In addition, we are planning updates from Windows XP to Windows 7 and from Office 2003 and Office 2007 to Office 2010. There is no timeline yet. We are also considering the possibility of using Office 365 and Citrix to move to a “cloud” virtual desktop solution, as many of our computers are too old to work well with the updates.

This year, we received funding from the district’s fund balance for new computing devices for K-3 classrooms for a third of the schools, for high school course recovery labs, and for middle school RtI Tier 2 remediation labs and math classrooms.

There is no funding for new teacher computers or other classroom or lab computers, although greatly needed. This was planned in the bond that failed.

There should not be a problem opening web mail from home. Contact the help desk at 5888 for assistance.

Walker Creek

12. Are we getting a supplemental pay bonus like we did last year?

A: No. The supplemental pay that was issued in late fall and early spring last year will not be continued this year.

13. Are we going to be able to order more LLI kits for our campus? At the moment we have only one kit being utilized by the interventionist. If classroom teachers are expected to use LLI for interventions then we need more of this resource on our campus. Being a non-Title 1 campus, the funds are limited. Will our students and teachers be afforded the same benefits from this superb resource?

A: We purchased one per campus. The model is designed so that only interventionists should need the kits, but our numbers may dictate otherwise. At \$3,000 for each kit, we cannot purchase them for every classroom teacher.

Watauga

14. Would you consider allowing us to be able to pay a small fee to keep a fridge or microwave in our rooms?

A: Due to the age and limitations of the electrical grids at many of our campuses, and in order to maintain consistency from campus to campus, it is not in the district's best interest to allow this privilege, even if a fee was charged, for classrooms unless demanded by a medical condition of a teacher or student.

15. How is the district proceeding after the previous bond package failed to pass?

A: The Board of Trustees will determine our path forward regarding another bond proposal in the near future. In the meantime, the district is addressing some needs across the district with local funds.

Spicer

16. We understand that the classroom televisions are not going to be replaced as they fail. Our morning announcements are currently televised to each classroom. We do use Ustream to send these announcements to our website, but the problem with Ustream being the delivery method to the classroom is that at that time classroom computers are being used for attendance, lunch count, and Smartboard work. What will be the best way to visually share things like morning pledges and announcements with each classroom in the future?

A: The use of the computer and the projector will be the only way in the future to view a presentation such as morning announcements. Either the computer/projector need to be made available in all classes during the live broadcast, or a video of the morning announcements needs to be saved as a file on the campus website and viewed when it is best for the teacher's schedule.

There is a solution to show morning announcements and other desired broadcasts live over the computers and projectors, but it is too expensive given that the bond failed. The cost is \$7,700 per campus. At this time, we are testing a new potential solution that costs about \$800.