

ELEMENTARY

Binion

1. ***What action will be taken for the shortage of substitute teachers in the district?***
 - A. The district will make every effort not to schedule training on Mondays or Fridays. These are high absenteeism days.
2. ***Can teacher prep days be increased before school starts next year?***
 - A. The Calendar Committee is preparing to meet to develop the 2013-14 school calendar. Your request will be sent to them for consideration.

Cheney

3. The district seems very invested in the Margaret Kilgo method. One of her biggest points is absolutely no multiple choice tests. ***How is the district going to deal with this in the future with district-wide benchmarks, SPS, etc.?***
 - A. There is really no conflict. An assessment system must have balance. There is a time for multiple types of assessments and that is why the lesson plan template has assessment types and provides teachers with choice. Mrs. Kilgo's point is that we need to ask students to show their work so that we are requiring them to demonstrate their thinking. As long as we simply use multiple choice items, students can guess and not really develop the cognitive discipline that the new STAAR/EOCs require. As teachers, we then lack evidence about students' cognitive reasoning when all we use are multiple choice items. How would we know why a student selected one distracter from another? The deciding point is, what is the reason for the assessment? Once that question has been answered, then selecting the appropriate assessment type is next. Remember, balance is the key.
4. Margaret Kilgo also stated that she "didn't believe in formative assessments," which seems contradictory to our training at the beginning of the year. ***With a lot of good training this year, how should we deal with the conflicting ideas?***
 - A. I really don't recall hearing Margaret Kilgo say that. Again, many people use terms without having a common definition. Formative assessments are excellent and research supports the value of using them. Mrs. Kilgo is coming from a standards-based view and advocating that assessments need to reflect the standards. Again, what she is advocating is not inconsistent with the research behind using formative assessments. An open-ended question that is over a curricular standard can be formative. It can also be summative. In Birdville, we define formative as items designed and used at the classroom level to determine the extent to which students are learning curricular standards over relatively short intervals so that appropriate

ELEMENTARY (continued)

adjustments can be made during the teaching/learning process. They are also used to scaffold the learning and assessment of students to build confidence and capacity required for success. Summative assessments inform teachers and students whether the intended learning (i.e., mastery) occurred at the end of a unit or course of study. They are primarily used for evaluative purposes, such as for grading or accountability rating, and are not typically used to provide detailed information for instructional decision-making at the student level. Please refer to the Glossary of Terms located in the district Curriculum Management Plan.

Foster Village

5. The state is mandating that referrals for special education be reduced, but the number of children with special needs remains the same. ***How does the district plan to handle this situation from a staffing standpoint? Will more inclusion teachers be hired or will the responsibilities for the general education teacher simply continue to increase?***
 - A. The current reality is that the number of students in special education in BISD is significantly above the state average. Obviously, this is an area we must address. We need to make sure that every student has access to instruction on grade level standards. General education teachers and special education teachers will need to work together to make this happen. Many BISD campuses are providing special education services in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible. The common intervention time embedded in the PLC structure will also help this process. We do not anticipate significant changes in special education staffing.

Francisco

6. Since writing is an area that we are low in across the district, ***is there a direction you want us to go in, or a resource that you would like for us to use for writing? For example: Norma Jackson, New Jersey Writing, etc.***
 - A. The elementary and secondary content coordinators are currently working on a draft for a district-wide writing program designed to improve student writing at all grade levels. Norma Jackson and Abydos (formerly NJWPT) are both being considered as possible resources. As soon as the draft is completed and reviewed by Cabinet, an implementation model will be disseminated to all writing teachers. Adequate training to successfully implement the district writing program will be a key component of the process.

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Holiday Heights

7. *Has the district considered opening an Early Childhood Center for Pre-K and PPCD? Will this be part of the new bond election?*

- A. An early childhood center is an excellent way to meet the needs of very young students. There has been some discussion regarding this, but a centralized location in a district the size of BISD would significantly increase drive time for many parents which would result in lower participation.

North Ridge

8. *Since we posed the question last year about the health curriculum, we have heard that it will be taught by the Counselor, Nurse and P.E. teacher. Is this true? Who will be giving the grade each six weeks?*

- A. Elementary, middle and high school P.E. teachers met in June to write curriculum for both P.E. and health. The standards for health are covered in P.E., science, lessons taught by the school nurse, and in guidance lessons. The curriculum writers determined that it was logical to continue the division of the health standards, and they created a document indicating which standards would be taught by each person. In K-1, a grade of E, S, N, or U will be reported for P.E. and science that includes progress on the health standards. In grades 2-5, progress on the health standards will be determined collaboratively by the P.E. and science teachers. The teacher of record for health is the P.E. teacher.

Hardeman

9. *Are there any plans to bring Margaret Kilgo back to provide additional training at some point? If so, when would this be?*

- A. Yes. We will be working with Margaret Kilgo to schedule additional training sessions, probably next year, to train ELL/reading teachers at the high school level as well as science and social studies teachers K-12.

Porter

10. *When should we expect to see lessons that are more closely aligned with the standards in math?*

- A. The expectation is that teachers will develop lessons using the standards as they are bundled by six weeks periods in euphoria! SchoolObjects:forethought™ (“Forethought”). Our coordinators are working to complete the clarification documents, aligned resources and assessment examples. The work of horizontal teams will be to locate resources which can include great lessons. Our coordinators will be facilitating those sessions.

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Porter (continued)

11. Are there plans to get Istation testing for math?

- A. Through Texas Success Initiative, the state is providing "Think Through Math" at no cost.

Spicer

12. Can you tell us what is being done to improve the response time of Forethought? Will there need to be just an upgrade in the server, or do our computers need some sort of upgrade too? Can you let us know where we are in the process and if there is a time we should expect to see improvement?

- A. Upgrades to the eduphoria! server are complete. The server is working fully and has a top level speed.

As a large database, there will be occasional momentary slowness due to "contention," an event where multiple people are accessing the same part of the database at the same time. The time delay is usually between two and twenty seconds. These delays should not happen often or be constant. They happen more often during busy times on the system. Eduphoria! can only improve the current system.

If you are using eduphoria! from home, you may have slowness due to your Internet service, as well as our Internet connection being occasionally slow when under substantial use.

The system requirements for eduphoria! call for two gigabyte (GB) of memory. About half of the teachers in the district have a computer that meets those specifications. The other half have only one GB of memory. This can slow down your eduphoria! experience. We are in the process of upgrading all machines to two GB of memory, plus installing Office 2010.

Some computers will be slow on eduphoria! if there is a physical problem such as a worn network cable or defective memory. If you feel that you have unusual slowness on your computer, please submit a service ticket for a diagnosis.

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Watauga

13. Why are parent education classes (such as ESL classes that focus on increasing parent communication with the school and reading skills), that have historically and successfully taken place during the day, now not allowed to be held on campus during school hours?

A. English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and parent education classes are normally/traditionally offered in the evenings to accommodate parents' work schedule. BISD had taken the extra steps to accommodate some parents who are "stay home mothers" by offering classes during the day time. This program was part of the grant-funded Event Start program, which took place at Cheney Elementary for 20 hours a week in the mornings but was abruptly eliminated at the state level. The Even Start program was run out of a portable building. However, due to the fact that many campuses are functioning above capacity, and for safety concerns, this program is no longer offered during the day. BISD continues to offer evening ESL and ABE classes free of charge at Shannon Learning Center and parent education classes at 20 ASPIRE centers.

14. How much money are we spending on programs such as Istation, and Forethought/Eduphoria!/Aware?

A. The transition to the eduphoria! SchoolObjects:suite™ ("Suite") has actually saved the district tens of thousands of dollars. In 2011-12, we were using four separate systems for the functions provided by eduphoria!: EdSoft/D2SC for reporting test data, Moodle for curriculum, ERO for professional learning, and eduphoria! SchoolObjects:pdas™. To get an idea of the cost savings, consider that the entire Suite costs less than the EdSoft system alone. By combining all of the systems into a single suite, we are able to not only save money, but also gain other benefits. The system components are interconnected and can share information, and eduphoria! provides additional functionality that did not exist in the separate systems, such as the eduphoria! SchoolObjects:formspace™ ("Formspace") component. All told, the move to eduphoria! has provided considerable cost savings to the district, increased functionality and ease of use.

Istation is free to the district through the Texas Success Initiative. Through that same state-wide initiative, the district will also have "Think Through Math."

Also, in addition to stipends for staff, the 2012-13 budget included several items to support our campus and staff. They include:

ELEMENTARY (continued)

Birdville ISD
2012-2013 Budget Highlights

- Enacted approximately \$2.4 million in expenditure reductions
- Added teaching staff to allow for a planning period for key subject areas at all secondary campuses
- Added 3.5 assistant principals to give additional instructional support to elementary campuses
- Acquired a longitudinal data reporting system to provide more accurate student performance data for all campuses
- Increased discretionary funding and copy allowances for all campuses
- Reconfigured the district's bilingual programs so that more students will receive bilingual services on their home campuses
- Provided funding to increase tutorial services for students receiving bilingual and ESL services
- Funded upgrades to science equipment and social studies materials for all campuses
- Purchased a new reading assessment tool for grades one and two (DRA2)
- Added a Director of Elementary Ed, four elementary math and reading consultants, and an elementary ELA/social studies consultant to improve central office support for elementary campuses
- Acquired a special education management software system to provide more accurate record keeping and tracking of services delivered to special needs students
- Funded additional security staff at BCTAL and all middle school campuses
- Upgraded aging defibrillators
- Funded capital improvements for the Fine Arts program
- Added a coordinator for federal and special state programs
- Funded summer school for students that do not pass EOC exams
- Upgraded calculators for EOC and STAAR exams
- Increased operating funding for building repairs
- Increased the technology budget to provide for improved system back-ups
- Provided a one-time \$450 supplement to every returning full-time employee and a \$225 supplement for returning part-time employees
- Restructured steps 19 through 23 of the teacher salary schedule to be more market competitive
- Added facilitator stipends for middle school department chairs

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Watauga

15. In light of the fact that BISD teachers and staff have not had a raise in three years and that other area districts have given raises, *when can BISD employees expect to receive a pay raise?*

- A.** During the 2010-11 school year, the board of trustees was able to give raises to all staff. It was \$600 for all teachers and a one percent increase at midpoint for the rest of the staff. However, in the last legislative session, the state cut funding to public schools by more than \$5 billion. This cut in funding impacted the funds available to BISD for their annual operating budget, which includes staff salaries.

The decision concerning raises for all staff next year will be made by the board of trustees prior to passing the 2013-14 budget.

HIGH SCHOOL

Birdville Center of Technology and Advanced Learning

16. It is a challenge for BCTAL to accommodate different high school schedules, with students being pulled for pep rallies, assemblies, class meetings, benchmark testing, etc. This variation of meetings on home campuses causes BCTAL students to miss valuable instruction time, sometimes on a weekly basis. As the district strives to eliminate random variation, *Will administration be addressing this inconsistency with high school schedules to allow more consistent attendance for students who attend classes at BCTAL?*

- A.** The BCTAL can't dictate schedules for the high school campuses. When students sign up for classes at the BCTAL, they do so knowing there will be activities on campus that they may miss. We will discuss with the principals and Dr. Anderson to see if there is anything we can adjust to benefit students.

Birdville

17. *Is it possible for employees to be granted one FREE ID every three years?*

- A.** If a security badge is broken or no longer works, it is replaced for free. The district does charge for lost badges. However, we will consider beginning a replacement cycle where badges can be replaced for free every three years.

18. *Has the 20-year step raise been eliminated?*

- A.** Each year, the district adopts a Hiring Schedule that is unique to that year. At the bottom of that schedule the following is stated: "This hiring schedule is for the ##### -##### school year. The Board of Trustees adopts a new compensation plan each year and future salaries cannot be assumed or predicted."

In setting the pay rates each year, the district seeks to adopt aggressively competitive salaries that compare favorably to those paid by neighboring districts that have a similar level of financial resources.

HIGH SCHOOL (continued)

The current 2012-13 Hiring Schedule does include step increases for every year of service through year 23.

Haltom

19. *What is the possibility of social studies getting a PLC period next year?*

- A. We will evaluate after this year's implementation of math and science PLC periods before making a determination of how this may be expanded in the future.

Richland

20. *What does the current Superintendent's Cabinet and Board of Trustees envision for high school final exam exemptions as incentive for student attendance and academic achievement?*

- A. BISD does have an exemptions policy:

Semester Examination Exemptions

- Students in grades nine through twelve are eligible for semester examination exemptions based on grades, attendance, and conduct as specified for each class.
- Students in grades nine through eleven are eligible to earn examination exemptions in odd numbered class periods (1, 3, 5, and 7) at the end of the first semester, and even-numbered class periods (2, 4, and 6) at the end of the second semester. Seniors may earn exemptions from examinations in any class in which they meet eligibility requirements.
- Students must maintain at least an 80 semester grade average to be eligible for a semester examination exemption in a class, and have no more than the number of excused absences specified below:

Grade of 80 to 84 - no absences during the semester

Grade of 85 to 89 - not more than one (1) absence during the semester

Grade of 90 to 94 - not more than two (2) absences during the semester

Grade of 95 or above - not more than three (3) absences during the semester

- Students with one (1) or more unexcused absences, more than three (3) tardies in a class, or more than one (1) six weeks conduct grade of N, or any conduct grade of U, may not be exempt from a semester examination.
- Students are required to attend classes in which they are exempt on examination days. An exemption is an exam exemption and not an attendance exemption. Students receiving exemptions are encouraged to take the examination, and have it scored. If the examination score will improve a student's grade average, it will be calculated as part of the semester average. Otherwise, the examination grade will not be counted.

HIGH SCHOOL (continued)

- For eligible students who choose not to take the examination, the semester grade will be based on the grades for the three (3) six-weeks grading periods only.

Also, BISD has partnered with Five Star Ford to give a car away at the end of the school year to a high school student. Students earn tickets based on perfect attendance and A/B Honor Roll.

21. What is the level of academic competition in UIL for the middle and elementary schools in order to promote academic competition in high school?

- A. Our current level of participation in UIL academics is sporadic at the high school level (BHS has the strongest participation and HHS and RHS compete but have a difficult time recruiting coaches). We have not had UIL academics at the elementary or middle school level, but we have participated in the following academic competitions:
- Texas Alliance for Minorities and Engineering (students do not have to be a minority to participate);
 - SMU Visioneering; and
 - Christopher Columbus awards–team problem solving with STEM (just added this year).

For elementary students, the main competition is Destination Imagination.