Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
December 9, 2013

Binion/Hardeman/Mullendore
1. **Why are we having an ongoing problem getting substitute teachers in the district?**

	Total Absences/Vacancies	Fill NOT Needed	Fill Needed	Filled	UnFilled	Held	Fill Rate
October 1-5	776	150	626	574	52	0	92%
October 6-12	688	180	508	487	21	0	96%
October 13-19	327	109	218	206	12	0	94%
October 20-26	264	22	242	192	50	0	79%
October 27-31	117	16	101	82	19	0	81%
Month	2172	477	1695	1541	154	0	91%

> **A:** Our fill rate for this time of year is normal. However, we will continue to add subs into the system throughout the year.

Birdville
2. **What are the impending effects of Obamacare with our healthcare through BISD? Do we need to have concerns for the following year and our healthcare future?**

> **A:** TRS ActiveCare Insurance participants are not affected by the new Affordable Care Act regulations until September 1, 2014. TRS will be meeting in February 2014 to consider health care options for the 2014-15 plan year. There is currently no indication that Birdville employees will lose the availability of the TRS ActiveCare Insurance plan. The Benefits Office will continue to monitor new developments in the Affordable Care Act and communicate as information becomes available.

3. **What are the district's plans on updating our school libraries to have a larger selection of bilingual books?** I feel that we are doing a huge disservice to our bilingual students and they should be provided with a variety of books just like our monolingual students. I know that this is a costly thing, but what is the expected timeframe for schools to receive books?

> **A:** Each BISD school library receives a district budget for books (based on campus enrollment), in addition to local campus-allocated funds and monies raised by fundraiser activities such as Book Fairs. Each individual campus should adopt procedures to facilitate campus library selections, which focus on the availability of materials to enrich and support the educational programs and curriculum goals/objectives of the district and school.
>
> A campus library media committee consisting of an administrator and teachers, facilitated by the Library Media Specialist, should collaborate to use budget allocations to select and develop library collections that support the needs of their respective students, teachers and stakeholders. Schools with a high need for bilingual materials should include the selection and acquisition of these materials in their purchases each year.

Birdville *(continued)*

Local Board Policy EFA (LOCAL) states that "Recommendations for library acquisitions shall involve administrators, teachers, other District personnel, and community representatives, as appropriate. Gifts of instructional resources shall be evaluated according to these criteria and accepted or rejected accordingly. Selection of library materials is an ongoing process that includes the removal of resources no longer appropriate and the periodic replacement or repair of materials still of educational value."

Academy at C. F. Thomas

4**. Why is our district adding extra stress to teachers' already very demanding job requirements with the two-week PDAS window?** I was around when PDAS was first implemented in the state of Texas, and the two-week window was vigorously protested with teachers from all over the state writing letters to their legislators, resulting in the elimination of this requirement. Teachers strongly believe in accountability and certainly have nothing to hide, but common sense should tell us that most teachers, being over-achievers, will feel extreme pressure during this two-week period. Common sense should also tell us that when teachers are overly stressed, it has a detrimental effect on students.

A: Although the two-week window process is not required by law, our policy consultant at the Texas Association of School Boards confirms that it is still a very common practice across the state. From an instructional evaluation standpoint, it is believed that utilizing a two-week observation window provides a far more accurate reflection of the quality of instruction which occurs in each classroom on a regular basis.

5. **Why do small schools with fewer students have the same number of interventionists (1 full-time Reading Interventionist and 1 part-time Math Interventionist)? Shouldn't the size of the student population be considered?**

A: Prior to the 2013-14 school year, many campuses did not have a full-time reading interventionist and most campuses did not have a math interventionist. Therefore, the district's first priority was to establish a baseline of intervention support. The district goal was that every elementary and middle school campus would have at least one full-time reading interventionist and a half-time math interventionist. To accomplish this goal, the district added seven staff positions at a cost of $450,000. The baseline has now been established. During this year's planning process, the district will review the RtI data for each campus and make recommendations.

Staffing is re-evaluated each spring. Differential staffing as you have described will be considered.

Foster Village

6. This year we have introduced math and reading coaches for teachers, along with interventionists for students, to meet the needs of students on lower-level tiers. **Is the district collecting baseline data on whether or not the use of coaches and interventionists is a cost-effective option for increasing benchmark performance and test scores? What data will the district be collecting in order to justify the expenditure?**

Foster Village *(continued)*

A: Currently, the C & I Department is working on a program evaluation process for the instructional coach positions. Student performance on benchmarks and state assessments will be an integral component of that program evaluation. When completed, the results of the evaluation will be shared with district and campus staff. Decisions regarding expanding, maintaining or reducing the role of the instructional coaches will be made based on the results of the program evaluation.

7. With the Obama administration, more attention has been brought to the childhood obesity epidemic spanning our nation. I feel that the Birdville Child Nutrition department has done an amazing job offering healthier portions and options for our children to ensure a more healthy diet while at school. That being said, there are days that we see children with two bags of chips and a beef jerky or ice cream in addition to their lunch. That's up to an *additional* 450 calories and 22 grams of fat just for one meal! **Who is monitoring the caloric intake of our students at school and when does the desire to decrease childhood obesity outweigh the need for additional profit earned by selling extra snacks? Is it within Birdville policy to offer an additional 2-3 snacks per lunch?**

   A: Currently Birdville does not have a policy allowing and/or limiting snacks. A parent may request a restriction based on number of snacks allowed each day or day of the week. At the elementary schools, the Child Nutrition manager encourages students to only purchase two snacks per day. The purchasing of snacks is really a parent decision and the Child Nutrition staff follows those requests. At the secondary level there is no limit on the number of snacks purchased each day.

Green Valley
8. **Because of the additional trainings and meetings the Reading Interventionists must attend, is there anyway a sub could be provided on those days so instruction would not be interrupted?**

   A: If a campus can locate a substitute who is trained in delivering the resources for Tier 3 intervention, the district will pay for a substitute. Otherwise, there is no need for one. We will do our best to limit the number of times interventionists are pulled off campus so that this is not a big issue.

9. Since everything is being sent to the campus electronically as well as textbooks not being furnished, campuses are having a larger paper count. It seems that the copies are being pushed onto the campus with no reimbursement for the amount they must spend (clicks/paper). **Is the district planning to accommodate those discrepancies with more funding so the campus can adequately provide for the scholars?**

   A: The district is providing the maximum number of copies that are funded in the current budget, which is seven copies per student per day. Additional funding should be requested through the budget process by the principals to increase district-funded copier allotments.

Green Valley (continued)

Many districts are decreasing their copier budgets by shifting instruction to non-print technologies, such as iPads and greater use of projectors and document cameras. It is our hope that we can procure more technology to make that possible.

North Ridge

10. **Is there any way that the ELA TEKS can be separated in Eduphoria!? It would make it easier to find the appropriate TEKS if the Reading and ELA were in two separate categories.**

    A: The TEKS pre-populate directly into Eduphoria! based on the designated strands as developed by teachers in conjunction with TEA and approved by the SBOE. The ELAR TEKS are divided into five strands: reading, writing, oral and written conventions (most of the English/grammar TEKS appear in this strand), research, and listening/speaking. Within each of these strands are components that define the type of text students will use or the type of writing students engage in. There are subsections within some of the components. When the TEKS populate into Eduphoria!, they are visible by these designated strands. When TEKS are chosen and approved by the curriculum-writing committees for each six weeks, they are pulled into Eduphoria! by those same strands.

Smithfield

11. **Could we have a place on the report cards to indicate students are on Tier 2 and 3?**

    A: Parents only need to be notified that their children are struggling in reading or math and that additional support is being provided; notification of a specific Tier is not required. Tier placement is information that is useful to the staff delivering instruction in order to design intervention schedules and provide instructional resources. The Tier number is of no value to parents.

12. **Does the district have any plans to put full-time APs on elementary campuses? Especially those campuses with transition and/or behavior units?**

    A: Staffing is evaluated each spring as part of the budget process. Over the past three years, BISD has added assistant principals and counselors at numerous campuses. The administration will continue to be sensitive to the needs of our campuses, and place staff as necessary and financially feasible

Walker Creek

13. YouTube is a valuable resource for instruction and is used daily in my classroom and many others on our campus. **Does the district plan to purchase software that will eliminate advertisements on the YouTube channel? Some of the advertisements are inappropriate and unavoidable.**

Walker Creek (continued)

A: This is a great point and one we are pursuing. There are several solutions of different types (web browser plug-in, browser code, proxy servers), but all of them have issues in deployment or use of network and computer resources. We are searching for a solution that works appropriately. Until we find one, we suggest staff use a site such as viewpure.com, where you can drop in the YouTube URL and only get the playback screen.

14. **What has happened to our initiative to prepare students for 21st century living in a world where technology is crucial to the work place?**

A: With the failure of the bond, we do not have the technology resources necessary to pursue 21st century concepts of learning and working that require mobility and personalized technology. To start, we need a more powerful wireless network in every building to support the new technology, at a cost of $18 million. New devices will also cost millions that are beyond the capacity of our regular budget. Teachers have stated that they need more access to this technology before they can reliably change instruction.

Watauga Elementary

15. Current state guidelines provide for economic and environmental disadvantage as an exclusionary factor, limiting the reception of services for a student identified as potentially requiring special education. Due to the state guidelines these students who are not having their most basic needs met, (i.e., nutrition), are oftentimes not revisited for further testing after economic/environmental disadvantages are identified. While it is understandable that a student at economic/environmental disadvantage would have difficulty performing at the same academic level as their healthy peers, **what other district level staffing/resources are available to provide for their basic needs not being met and the educational support they need? What can the district do to assist in campus' funding for these basic needs?**

A: Sadly, many of our students come to school without having their basic needs met. While an inadequate home life may cause a student to have difficulty achieving, it does not necessarily cause the student to meet the criteria of having a disability. The Federal Title I program is designed specifically to assist students from lower income homes. The district annually receives over $4 million in Title I funds. These funds are distributed to 21 Birdville campuses to provide educational support for their students.

16. **Security in schools is certainly a hot topic being discussed nationwide. What is the district doing to enhance security on campus to keep our students and teachers safe?**

A: Since September 11, 2001, we have worked diligently with the local PD, FD, and EMT to ensure that all of our schools are safe and secure. The BISD Emergency Management Team meets regularly with local law enforcement agencies and multiple times a year have tabletop exercises so we can respond appropriately when a crisis occurs. After the shootings last January in Connecticut the cities of North Richland Hills, Richland Hills, Watauga and Haltom City began working together and practicing live shooter drills in our schools. Last year during Spring Break, they trained in five different schools and during the summer, they utilized multiple Fridays to continue training.

Watauga Elementary *(continued)*

> BISD has been working on increasing the number of cameras in our secondary schools. Each regular high school has over 100 cameras and middle school about 25 cameras (about ½ inside and ½ outside). We are limited at the elementary schools with approximately three cameras per campus, but we hope that these can be adjusted upward at the next Bond Election.
>
> In addition, the Board of Trustees, (in the late spring 2013), has approved about $150,000 that has been allocated for securing the front doors of all of our K-8 schools. This work was completed before the end of September and we are endeavoring to get 100% of our doors locked at all elementary and middle schools. We are always working with our campus administration to get as many doors locked as possible at our high schools, but it is difficult with facilities that were designed years ago. We will continue to work on this issue.

West Birdville

17. **Is there any empirical data demonstrating the success of WIN (RtI) that we can share with staff?**

    A: Educational research provides some insight into the effectiveness of an RtI approach; however, there is currently some debate in the literature as to whether sufficient data exist to evaluate the overall efficacy of comprehensive, multi-tiered, campus-based programs. Better evidence exists on the effectiveness of specific components of this model. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) has evaluated these components based on the research literature and made recommendations for their implementation into RtI practice in reading (Gersten et. al., 2008) and mathematics (Gersten, 2009).

    The chart below provides a listing of their recommendations for practice as well as the level of evidence backing the effectiveness of the practice at the time of report publication.

    Reading

Recommendation	Level of Evidence
1. (Tier 1) Screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year. Regularly monitor the progress of students at risk for developing reading disabilities.	Moderate
2. (Tier 1) Provide time for differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessments of students' current reading level.	Low
3. (Tier 2) Provide intensive, systematic instruction on up to three foundational reading skills in small groups to students who score below the benchmark score on universal screening. Typically, these groups meet between three and five times a week, for 20 to 40 minutes.	Strong
4. (Tier 2) Monitor the progress of tier 2 students at least once a month. Use these data to determine whether students still require intervention. For those students still making insufficient progress, schoolwide teams should design a tier 3 intervention plan.	Low
5. (Tier 3) Provide intensive instruction on a daily basis that promotes the development of the various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after reasonable time in tier 2 small group Instruction.	Low

West Birdville (continued)

Mathematics

Recommendation	Level of Evidence
1. (Tier 1) Screen all students to identify those at risk for potential mathematics difficulties and provide interventions to students identified as at risk.	Moderate
2. (Tiers 2 & 3) Instructional materials for students receiving interventions should focus intensely on in-depth treatment of whole numbers in kindergarten through grade 5 and on rational numbers in grades 4 through 8. These materials should be selected by committee.	Low
3. (Tiers 2 & 3) Instruction during the intervention should be explicit and systematic. This includes providing models of proficient problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback, and frequent cumulative review.	Strong
4. (Tiers 2 & 3) Interventions should include instruction on solving word problems that is based on common underlying structures.	Strong
5. (Tiers 2 & 3) Intervention materials should include opportunities for students to work with visual representations of mathematical ideas and interventionists should be proficient in the use of visual representations of mathematical ideas.	Moderate
6. (Tiers 2 & 3) Interventions at all grade levels should devote about 10 minutes in each session to building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic facts.	Moderate
7. (Tiers 2 & 3) Monitor the progress of students receiving supplemental instruction and other students who are at risk.	Low
8. (Tiers 2 & 3) Include motivational strategies in tier 2 and tier 3 interventions.	Low

In BISD, we have only recently begun to implement RtI practices systematically across the district as outlined in the RtI plan. The plan is consistent with recommendations for best practice, including universal screening, providing interventions for students identified as at risk, and using intensive, explicit and systematic small-group instruction in key foundational areas. However, at this point in time, there still exists considerable variability across the district in how the plan is being implemented at the campus level.

In terms of obtaining empirical evidence relating to the success of RtI, it is clear that the classroom teacher, the PLC, interventionists, and campus administrators are in key positions to observe the impact of RtI on student learning. Evaluating the effectiveness of implementation and success of the structures and strategies utilized is essential to the core work of PLCs, and should be part of ongoing discussions at the grade level/department and campus level. As we work our way through this first year of implementation, the district will be developing a more formal evaluation process to determine the fidelity of implementation of the plan, the relationship between implementation of the RtI program and improvement in student learning, and to gather feedback from teachers and other campus personnel regarding the practices that they have found to be effective and to identify any opportunities we may have to improve upon the design.

West Birdville *(continued)*

References
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Gersten, R., Beckmann, S., Clarke, B., Foegen, A., Marsh, L., Star, J. R., & Witzel, B. (2009). Assisting students struggling with mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for elementary and middle schools (NCEE 2009-4060). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Both of the above resources are available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/.

Other Resources
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18. Many districts have time built into the school year for parent/teacher conferences. I know that we have guidelines concerning number of days that students must be in attendance and number of professional learning days for teachers. **Is it possible for us to check into how other districts are able to manage this within their calendars?** (Northwest ISD, HEB ISD, Grapevine/Colleyville ISD)

    A: The District Calendar Committee has already met and created three proposed calendars for the 2014-15 school year, which have been submitted to the Board. Selection and adoption of the 2014-15 calendar is scheduled for the Dec. 16 Board meeting. Your suggestion will be considered next year for the 2015-16 school year.

Haltom Middle

19. **During the summer, can middle school math curriculum and timelines be created by a group of TEACHERS from several schools, from each grade level who currently teach and have taught the subject for several years? Can we bring back summer classes (like we used to do for CMP) about how to teach math for each grade level, for new teachers and teachers who need a refresher?**

    A: All curriculum work is done by teachers under the leadership of content coordinators. Campus administrators recommend teachers to serve on vertical or horizontal writing teams, and knowledge of the curriculum (prior, current, and future) is an expectation. Since there will be a new textbook adoption for K-8 math in 2014-15, the necessary professional learning to implement the new resources will be scheduled during the summer and during teacher in-service in August. If CMP is the resource selected by teachers and approved by the Board, subsequent training will be planned.

20. **Is there a way we can get student cards for outside teachers to allow students in the building? As of right now we are sending the teacher IDs with them to get them in the building.**

    A: This is already being done at a couple of our middle schools. If the campus principal wants this to occur they can put in a TIMS service order.

North Richland Middle
21. Attendance is key to achieving academic success. It seems, at the middle school level that although extreme absenteeism is reported to the proper authority, there is little intervention or follow through short of notification of the truancy officer. Realizing we have only one officer, **what can be done about following these extreme cases into the court system so that there is credibility in what teachers say to the kids when they have 15 plus absences? Can we not go to court to ensure the parents and students are clear about the importance and legality of being in school, especially when a teacher's attempts go unnoticed or disregarded by the student and their guardians?**

    A: A couple of issues occur here. As you know, in the last legislative session some members of the legislature wanted to eliminate tickets altogether including "Failure to Attend School." In BISD, as our demographics change, we ALL must work with students and families to assist them in seeing the importance of school attendance. It is important to note that the Attendance Officers are the last resort. We can file charges on a student once they have 10 unexcused absences in a six-month period (we cannot file a case on excused absences). The way to assist these students and families is through positive relationships with teachers, assistant principals and/or the counselor that will make them want to attend classes.

Watauga Middle
22. Pinterest is a valuable tool for teachers. YouTube also has questionable material but we are allowed access to the 'good' material. Please trust us to use Pinterest as a resource. **Would the district reconsider allowing staff access to Pinterest?**

Watauga Middle (continued)

A: Pinterest has made great strides in their policy, which now eliminates graphic pornography and nudity. However, in practice, their system is not able to filter vulgar and profane terms and still provides representations of pornography. We are watching Pinterest closely in hopes they will clean this up. When they do, we will reinstate it. YouTube has an effective filtering and flagging safety system. Pinterest is lacking in that area.

The Cabinet has directed the Technology Department to review the foundation principles that our blocking and filtering is based on. We are putting together a committee to review this process and recommend change. The use of the Internet has changed greatly since the CIPA was passed and filtering was created. The advent of social media has forever changed the nature of educational content in a way that is difficult to protect students without severely restricting access to quality instructional content.

23. Teachers need to have the ability to call non-local numbers from their classrooms since so many people no longer have local area codes. I'm having to use my own cell phone minutes to call most of my students' parents. **Is there another solution?**

A: As the technology changes, so does the need. This will be brought to the Cabinet. The long distance budget will have to be increased. Estimating that cost will be difficult, but we are losing ability to communicate the way it is now.

Smithfield Middle
24. We have been blessed year after year with new technology and technology improvements. In a way, we may be a little spoiled by the number of enhancements we have received for our students. Document cameras, projectors, laptops, desktops in computer lab settings and all the associated software and online access have become essential every day elements of our plans. We have also been spoiled by very quick responses for repairs and replacements. It seems that the response times we have gotten used to may no longer be realistic. **So, to get an idea of what we should expect, could you please give a "state of the district" update on our existing technology and the maintenance of existing systems and hardware?**

A: This information is being prepared for the Cabinet and Board now.

A high-level overview is that most of our computers and devices are over seven years old and are failing at a rate faster than we are funded to repair or replace. Current funding for new technology is focused on specific initiatives, such as RtI and credit recovery. Staffing has been increased, but new instructional and data initiatives and raising the quality of our work has absorbed the use of the additional staff time. With the failure of the bond, the future is uncertain and requires Cabinet and Board direction with guidance from the staff and community through the current Strategic Planning process.

Haltom

25. **Can we get TIMS to warn teachers when they are going to be shutting down the Internet for a test?** On Oct. 21 about 8:23 a.m., this happened and there was no warning, the Internet was down about 10 minutes, but some of us had students working on the Internet at this time. Had I known it was going to be down at that time I could have rearranged several activities, but I had a few minutes of dead air until I could figure out what the problem was. With our class periods so short already most teachers do not need any dead air interfering with student's education.

   A: The Technology Department does not do tests or commence with planned outages on the network without first informing the district staff. Planned outages are almost always done at night. There was no planned outage on the day you mentioned.

   The district network has occasional outages for many reasons over which we have no control, such as power outages in-route, squirrels chewing through fiber cable and mice chewing network connections in the school, as well as service outages from our provider, Region 11, or their providers, Cogent and AT&T. We have many redundant systems that keep the network up in some of these scenarios, so you see less interruption than we would have without the redundancies.

Questions sent back to the campus to be answered:

Birdville Elementary
1. **Can teachers expect to have laptops instead of teacher computers in the near future?**

    A: Our goal is to move teachers to mobile technology. The only question is whether teachers will need a larger screen, and therefore, a dock to easily connect to an external monitor. However, since the bond failed, there is no current funding to replace teacher computers. The superintendent will present this need to the Board as we move into the budget process for next year.

West Birdville
2. Schools nationwide are working to revise menus to meet new federal nutrition requirements that mandate fewer calories, more whole grains, lower sodium levels, and more fruits and vegetables. **What different methods are we as a district implementing in terms of food palatability, food waste, and teaching students the importance of nutrition?**

    A: We are always looking for what we call "kid friendly foods" that encompass all the USDA requirements. We do offer a healthier version of student favorites (i.e., pizza) that has 51 percent whole grain and low sodium. Food preparation and presentation are very important to ensure acceptability of the menu. Some of the ways nutrition education is provided to our students is each month a vegetable/fruit is highlighted, and nutrition education information is provided on our website and through visual media at each campus.

Watauga Middle
3. **With so many events going on in the district, athletics and fine arts, will the district plan on looking at the "Square" credit card swiper/reader for electronic devices (iPhone, iPad, android, etc.) for those individuals that do not carry cash around?** This would also benefit when we have school-sponsored fundraising.

Watauga Middle (continued)

    A: The District's current credit/debit card servicing company, RevTrak, does not have the swiper/reader available for electronic devices at this time. We can, however, utilize a card reader with a laptop or desktop computer. The District uses RevTrak because they specialize in school district electronic payments and the unique recordkeeping requirements of school districts. RevTrak also maintains an online web-store for the District. In this store, campuses and departments can create "products" for online payment access. The District has recently used this service for employee flu shots.

    For campuses and departments that would like to utilize a card reader for a laptop or desktop computer, the Business Office would need notification two weeks before the event to allow time to secure the card readers and set up the product information in the web-store.