

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**Academy at C.F. Thomas**

1. In Birdville the push has been that through PLC's, WIN time and with the standards, we should be teaching "with the end in mind." We have been very purposeful in looking at what the standards say, what we want the students to learn and then planning the activities that will help our students get to that point. However, in Kindergarten for the past two six weeks we have not received our report card until the week before the six week ends. This makes it very difficult to "teach with the end in mind," when we don't necessarily know what the end is. We continue to look on eduphoria! and teach the standards as they are laid out, but it is difficult to know which standards to focus on first when we have no report card. ***Is this issue being addressed, and if so can we get our report cards for the rest of the year by the start of the third six weeks?***
  - A. The Kindergarten progress report will reflect the scope and sequence documents in Forethought each six weeks. Following that should ensure that teachers have covered everything that is being evaluated and reported to parents. The teachers on the writing task force have asked to complete the progress report one six-week period at a time, and the plan is to accelerate the dates on which the group meets so that all the documents can be completed as soon as possible. January 5, 2013 is the next meeting date. In addition to preparing the third six weeks progress report, the group will determine other dates on which to complete this task.
2. When we have our holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, can we consider for next year not to have two half days and instead one full day on Thursday and Friday? In other words no school for students on Friday and the teachers can have a paid day to work in their classroom? For example, in Option A of the 2013-2014 calendar, the day, Dec. 19-20. ***Can we consider changing these two half days to one full day and one work day?***
  - A. The half days count as full days because of waivers with TEA. If we combine the two half days into one full day, we will have to add an additional day of instruction to the calendar.

**Binion**

3. Several districts include math computations in the daily curriculum. Teachers in the past have been discouraged to teach rote memory math facts due to the heavy emphasis on Envisions and Investigations. Math facts mastery is essential before students reach STAAR grades. Teachers spend more time than they should teaching math facts in grades 3-5 than problem solving skills, because students are missing these fundamentals. With STAAR Math being a timed test, students can't afford to NOT know their math facts by memory. ***Can the district provide math computation materials for all grades and imbed it into the curriculum?***
  - A. At least two products have been provided for campuses, not including basic flash cards and other tools that can easily be made by the students. Timez Attack is an online program available in all computer labs, and Triangle Flash Cards are available in the resources section of Forethought. It is important to note, however, that these tools should be used within the scope of the curriculum so that students understand the algorithms involved and are not just memorizing them.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (continued)**

**Binion (continued)**

4.

Grade 3 Unit 7 Resources			
TEKS	Required	Recommended	Suggested
3.8	Investigations Unit 9: 1.1 – Sorting Polyhedra Supporting Lesson: enVision 14: 14-1 – Solid Figures		
3.8	Investigations Unit 9: 1.2 – What’s My Shape? Supporting Lesson: enVision 14: 14-2 – Relating Solids and Shapes		
3.8	Investigations Unit 9: 1.3 – Building Polyhedra from Pictures or Models		

This is an example of what we currently have in eduphoria! for the third six weeks in math. *Is it possible for curriculum coordinators to provide a six-week outline or a daily target plan (similar to what is provided by the science coordinator)?*

- A. This information is available in Forethought. Click on any of the Units, go to Unit Documents, then Unit Overview. Suggested pacing is provided on either of two documents in that location. Daily lessons for math are not included in Forethought because each teacher needs to look at the standards closely to determine the needs of individual students in the classroom.

**Birdville**

5. *Why did they change the master’s degree salary to a stipend? How does this affect employees in regard to retirement? Is this (salary + stipend) considered our total salary or just the salary amount? How does this affect highest 3 year salaries for retirement?*

- A. This change was made to simplify our accounting and payroll system as we convert to a new software system. It does not change the amount or nature of the extra dollars an employee earns as a reward for having a master’s or doctorate degree.

The money received as a master’s or doctorate supplement is included in your three year average for TRS purposes.

## Superintendent's Communications Council

### Campus Questions

December 10, 2012

#### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** *(continued)*

##### **Birdville** *(continued)*

6. It is our understanding that we are unable to scan scores into AWARE after the testing deadline has passed. If we do, scores “disappear” and are not added to our data. ***Is there a way that this can be changed?*** Due to absences some students miss this timeframe and new students move in regularly. We would like to be able to have data on these students included in our reports so that we can show growth, etc.
  - A. While the Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) testing window is limited to one week, the scanning window is open an additional two days into the following week to allow teachers to score make-up tests. If a campus has additional tests to scan after the window closes, the accountability office will make arrangements with you to get the information into the system. Since CBAs assess the written and taught curriculum, caution should be exercised when interpreting results for students who are new to the district and may not have received specific instruction in the content covered by the assessment.

##### **Foster Village**

7. ***Why was Istation chosen over TPRI as a Reading assessment?***

- A. ISIP was selected as the universal screener because it spans grades K-8. Having consistent, valid data based on a common screener allows the district and campuses to make informed decisions regarding RTI. Identifying both strengths and weaknesses in Reading instruction across the district will enable content coordinators to more productively lead in the development of the district reading curriculum. Both TPRI and MSTAR (middle school) are valid assessments, but the issue of getting consistent data can more easily be accommodated by using an equally valid assessment that is broader in scope. Having been selected by TEA as the sole resource for use in the Texas SUCCESS Initiative for Reading, ISIP certainly meets the criteria needed to support the district's choice.

##### **Francisco Elementary**

8. In the past, we have been allowed to turn in documentation of Professional Learning or COMP time to use in lieu of reporting to work on the Saturday work day in January. ***Is that a possibility for this year, and if so, can documentation of the 6 hours of School Safety Videos be used?***
  - A. Watching the required videos can't be used to count for the flex day. The comp day in January is for those who attended professional learning opportunities while they were off contract for the summer.
9. The calendar options for 2013-14 all include an August 16 work day, with an option for teachers to use COMP time when professional learning has been completed during off duty time the previous summer. ***Is that option also available to paraprofessional staff?***
  - A. Yes, if they have the appropriate hours documented. Also, some of our paraprofessionals work for comp time during registration before they are on duty. This would help them get back a day without being off campus when students are in school.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (continued)**

**Green Valley**

10. As the state has increased the rigor of elementary standards, *will the district continue to utilize a checklist type report card for Kindergarten and first grade, as it gives parents limited information about the level of students' mastery? We understand that it is a standards-based reporting system that identifies mastery, but at what level?*
- A. This question will likely be part of the discussion when a district grading committee is organized later in the year. At this time, there have been no discussions regarding a change from using the standards-based report cards in first and second grades.
11. *Can systems be put into place for timely access for teachers of record?* How could Specials teachers be provided access to Skyward for the students they teach? Why does it take so long to program the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade report cards? (We were told they are programmed by school number.) Specials teachers have been left to create their own grade books because the district has not provided a system. Kindergarten and first grade teachers are receiving their report cards in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> week of the six weeks. This is not supporting the Assessment for Learning Model, "begin with the end in mind".
- A. Kindergarten progress reports are no longer part of the Skyward system. Availability of those documents was addressed in the question from Binion Elementary. TIMS must make revisions to the first-grade report card by campus. We will request that these documents be available earlier in the six weeks if at all possible.

**Hardeman**

12. *In regard to CBAs, is it in any way possible to alter the schedule of administering these?* The problem we have is that we have to administer 4 tests in one week. We feel these tests are not exactly valid due to the fact that the little ones seem to get burned out easily taking tests each day. We understand there are reasons for administering these every 9 weeks, but is it possible to extend the testing window to two weeks? If a student misses one or two days during the window, they are forced to take 2-3 tests a day and it seems they are not developmentally ready for this task at this point in the year. If extending the testing window is not an option, would it be possible to extend the "scanning" window for teachers? Another problem we face, being such a large campus, is that all 17 teachers administering CBAs are wasting valuable time literally waiting in line to scan tests at the end of the day. If we cannot have more time to do this, would a second scanner be an option?
- A. 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 Curriculum Based Assessments (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.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (continued)**

**Hardeman (continued)**

As discussed above, tests may be scanned into the system through Tuesday of the week following the test window, providing additional time to test students with excessive absences. We are currently working to assess scanner needs for large elementary campuses and additional scanners may be needed to compensate for times of peak usage. Each campus should develop a strategy for scanning tests to best fit their needs. It is not required that teachers scan their own tests immediately following test administration. The system allows for any person to scan any answer document at any time within the scanning window. For example, one teacher could scan all tests for an entire grade level in all subject areas, which would reduce the need to stand in line.

13. We know there is an issue with substitutes in the district. We understand that Mondays and Fridays are issues. However, even during the week with trainings and illness absences there does not seem to be enough subs or quality subs at that. ***Would more substitute orientations be an option?*** We feel a second orientation later in the fall would be very beneficial. If not, or in addition to a second fall orientation, we feel the quality of the training needs improvement.

- A. We held three orientations this fall, and we are hosting another one in December. September 11 was for retired teachers only who wanted to sub. The September 26 and October 10 trainings were for applicants selected through the job posting. On December 11 and January 3 we are hosting trainings for applicants who completed student teaching this fall and will be certified teachers upon graduating this month. In January a sixth training is scheduled applicants who apply to our current sub job posting.

**Holiday Heights**

14. In the classroom, we are dealing with more severe behaviors than ever before, which ultimately affect the learning of both that student plus those in the classroom. Teachers feel like their hands are tied since we are discouraged from referrals for special ed or transition classes. Parent support is not always there. ***What can the district do to help the classroom teachers and school administrators with this issue?***

- A. The district has a behavior consultation system in place for students with extreme behaviors. When a student continues to exhibit extreme behavior, the CARE team can request a behavior consultation. A behavior interventionist or a LSSP will observe the child, make recommendations, and later follow-up to see if the behavior improves. The district is also developing a behavioral RTI system that will probably begin next year.

**North Ridge**

- 15 ***Why is the district implementing so many things: TTM, ePals, Forethought, Math Academy, Kilgo, LOL, Istation, etc.? Why are the same people continually pulled for these trainings? Is this good for the children for the same teacher to be out so often?*** Those that are going are grateful for the opportunity for trainings, but also feel that it is hard to implement all the different things to a degree that they will be helpful. Why not just focus on a few things? Some are feeling overwhelmed, overworked and exhausted.

**Superintendent's Communications Council**  
**Campus Questions**  
**December 10, 2012**

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (continued)**

**North Ridge (continued)**

- A. Other than ePals, which has been in place in the district for at least four years, all the other initiatives mentioned were implemented as a result of a review of district data. Critical issues were discovered that require systemic change in order for BISD students to be successful. Based on your review of the data, which, if any of these initiatives could possibly be eliminated and still enable us to improve student achievement across the district? The C & I staff would appreciate your input regarding this.

**16. What will be done with last-minute decisions that are being made for training/curriculum?**

Several of us are being alerted about such meetings as little as two days before we are to attend. These add extra stress of finding a sub at the last minute, as well as creating sub plans for things we were not aware we needed to attend.

- A. Unless something unexpected occurs, notices regarding upcoming meetings are sent to principals at least two weeks ahead of time so preparations can be made for those attending. If needed, the Professional Learning Department will monitor communications regarding off-campus meetings and make adjustments in procedures.

**Porter**

**17. Is there a way that eduphoria! can become more iPad friendly?** Right now you can't double click your standards into your lessons from the iPad.

- A. The programming behind eduphoria! Forethought is not written to function with a touch-interface, like the iPad. There are apps that make using eduphoria! a little better, such as Cloud Browse or Puffin, but neither allow for double-clicking the standards.

We are keeping our eyes on eduphoria! to see if they will be developing a Forethought app since they have had success with a great app for PDAS (for administrators); however, there is no guarantee at this time. Concerning lesson plans, it is recommended that the iPad be used for viewing your plans rather than building them. This video explains how you can use your iPad in lieu of printing your plans: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/IYqsI4tLMCw?rel=0>.

**18. Can the glitch in eduphoria! regarding the standards being checked be fixed?** When we plan as a team and then copy the plans over to our own planner the green checks do not appear by the standards that we have copied over.

- A. When you add standards to a lesson in the Team Planner and copy to your personal planner, the green check does appear and the standard will show as being taught. If in the Team Planner you double-click the standard within Unit 1, that same standard will show as being taught in Unit 1 in your personal planner. However, if the same standard is also in Unit 2, it will not show as being taught. Each instance of each standard is treated as a separate item because the context often changes when we approach the same standard in multiple units. If you experience a case where you do not see your standards showing as taught, please let Crysten Caviness know the specifics, so she can go into your planner and diagnose the problem.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (continued)**

**Smithfield**

19. A boost was given to the budget of my campus this school year. With the extra funds we have been able to have training and buy more materials for learning. ***Are there plans to add more budget money to the campuses?***
- A. We have just begun the budget process for the 2013-2014 school year and have not looked at future campus allocations at this time. However, we are comfortable in saying that if extra funds are available, we will always look to campus needs first.
20. Plans are currently underway for a bond referendum. We are excited that the long-term health of the school district's infrastructure is so important to the leadership team. ***What plans are being made to take care of the long-term health of the employees (i.e., raises and better health care)?***
- A. The decision concerning raises for all staff next year will be made by the board of trustees prior to passing the 2013-14 budget. As far as health care, BISD is under the state plan and can't change health care providers.

**Watauga**

21. ***Is the district moving towards replacing Math and Reading Specialists with EAs in the Title 1 schools?***
- A. No.
22. ***Will all elementary school teachers eventually have to be self-contained classrooms?***
- A. Providing the most appropriate educational setting for student success is the goal for every classroom in the district. Both district and campus staff should always be researching best practices and reviewing data to make decisions regarding this issue. Current research supports self-contained educational settings for elementary students, particularly in the primary grades. There are no planned requirements for this setting in place at this time, but input from campuses would be appreciated.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Haltom**

23. BISD is now the lowest paying school district in Tarrant County in years 15 to 20 of teacher experience. ***When will our district's salaries be equivalent to HEB and Keller in that range of teacher experience?***
- A. Each year as we begin developing a budget for the upcoming year, we benchmark Birdville ISD salaries against those of our neighboring districts. When we proposed a salary schedule for the 2011-2012 school year, we proposed salaries that, based on the information available to us at the time, were significantly higher than the average of the salaries paid by our neighbors. That was certainly true at steps 15 and 20.

## Superintendent's Communications Council

### Campus Questions

December 10, 2012

#### **MIDDLE SCHOOL (continued)**

##### **Haltom (continued)**

We were able to propose that salary schedule in spite of the fact that BISD receives less revenue per student than all but one Tarrant County school district.

Because BISD is required to adopt a budget in June, while many of our neighbors do not adopt a budget until August, we have to benchmark against the salaries that other districts tell us they are going to adopt.

We will certainly go through that exercise again this year and plan to adjust to market conditions as well as possible based on the information available to us when the budget is adopted.

(BISD does currently pay less than Keller and HEB at those steps but is not the lowest paying district in Tarrant County. Just to name one, the district pays more than Grapevine Colleyville.)

24. The District's ELA Department spends a lot of classroom time teaching their students test taking strategies that involve annotation on reading assessments both on the passages and test questions. ***Why would the district make the decision to use class sets for the next District Snapshot?***

- A. Based in part on feedback from campuses, the Accountability Department has chosen to pilot the use of class sets of test booklets for secondary CBAs in order to reduce printing costs reduce labor at the district and campus levels, and reduce environmental impact. It is estimated that moving to class sets in secondary schools will save the district more than \$7,000 in printing costs for the January administration alone. The district must be strategic in the way it utilizes funds and these savings could better be used in ways that are more impactful on student learning than in printing additional tests.

Recall that the purpose of CBAs is to assess the curriculum; they are not intended to serve as practice for STAAR. Blank paper may be provided to students wishing to annotate text or take notes.

While teaching students to use test-taking strategies may have been marginally useful under TAKS, there is no indication that such an approach will promote success on STAAR. The test is timed, the text is written at a higher level with no word-count limit, and the items are more rigorous, requiring students to engage with text in ways they have never done before. It is strongly recommended that test-taking strategies be used judiciously for all students, and teachers should ensure that such strategies are helping students, rather than creating additional work during testing that may actually reduce stamina and performance.



**MIDDLE SCHOOL (continued)**

**North Richland**

25. *Would it be possible for the Calendar Committee and the BISD Cabinet to consider having a holiday between Labor Day and Thanksgiving, such as Columbus Day or Texas State Fair Day, to improve absenteeism and give the teachers a short break?*
- A. Since the Calendar Committee has already finished their work on the proposed 2013-14 calendars, this would have to be considered for the 2014-15 school year. In order to do this, an additional day of instruction would have to be added somewhere on the calendar.
26. *Is there a way that all Pre-AP teachers who wish to do so can be funded to attend the Advanced Placement summer institute?*
- A. The district will continue to provide funds for Advanced Placement Summer Institute (APSI), but training AP teachers must be accomplished. If additional funds are available after AP teacher training requirements have been met, APSI will be offered to Pre-AP teachers.
27. *Is there a way for Pre-AP teachers and AP teachers to team in order to promote better vertical alignment between middle school and Pre-AP and high school AP courses?*
- A. The plan is to begin formal teaming this summer, in the interim, the middle school Advanced Academic (AA) team is attending a vertical teaming training that is occurring at HHS by a college board presenter. The three high schools are sending their AA specialists and teachers. From this meeting, we believe we will make a plan for second semester to begin some key conversations for planned vertical teaming. The professional development days this year are already accounted for, and the AP teachers have been working on their syllabi all year, which must be done first so that the vertical teaming is aligned to what the AP course syllabi covers.

So, to recap, the plan is as follows:

1. Horizontal teaming (not just in Pre-AP/AP, but district-wide in PLCs)
2. Vertical team training of specialists and high school teachers—with a target of Pre-AP/AP teachers (vertical teams are also forming district-wide for on-level courses as well)
3. Planning of summer vertical teams for Pre-AP and AP teachers with informal meetings with teachers
4. Summer vertical teaming
5. Request that time be allowed during professional development days for vertical teams to meet