

**Superintendent's Communications Council
Campus Questions
February 6, 2017**

ELEMENTARY

ACFT

1. How will the A–F Rating System impact our District and individual schools?

A. The answer is difficult to know at this point. The provisional ratings released to the public on January 6, 2017 were based on incomplete data evaluated through sets of rules that will change before the first official A–F ratings will be released in August 2018. As such, the current ratings are simply a preview to the proposed new accountability system, and do not impact our campuses and District through the state accountability system. Thus, the only impact at this point may be on the community's perception of schools and districts, which is possibly based on an incomplete understanding of how letter grades were assigned.

2. Is there a way that schools with more need for interventionists (because of a large number of low students) can be given extra help by the District?

A. We are working on budget and staffing for next year and this is a part of the conversation.

Binion

3. Would there be a way to prepopulate more of the forms on the registration so parents do not need to key in the same information on every page of the registration?

A. The new programming staff we hired this school year have the skills to make this happen and are working on it. We do not have a timeline on completion yet. We are looking at the way it is done at Eagle Mountain – Saginaw ISD and determining how to tweak it for Birdville.

4. Will the district be willing to add covers to our play areas in order to provide shade for students on hot days. I have noticed some Birdville campuses have shaded playgrounds and others do not.

A. Covers seen around the District were individual projects taken on by the PTAs of those campuses. To implement a District initiative that would provide covers over the entire playground apparatus with good shade coverage at the elementary campuses would be cost prohibitive in the Facilities Management budget.

Cheney

5. Has the district considered having an aide for teachers and students in all Prekindergarten classes? They are so useful in the Prekindergarten 3 classes and would be helpful in all the classes especially during times when assessments must be completed on the students.

A. While it would be ideal for all pre-K classes to have additional support, it is only mandated in the 3-year-old classes. When it comes to assessments, work with your campus leadership to strategically create a schedule that could support all of the needs.

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Francisco/Mullendore

6. I am concerned about the new rating system that came out from TEA. I read the article from the district, but I am wondering **what else is being done to combat this negative press? Do we have a voice in Austin speaking for us?**

A. The Board approved a resolution opposing the A-F ratings on January 26. BISD joins more than 450 other districts from across the state who are standing up in opposition. The signed resolution was mailed to our elected officials.

Regardless of the new labeling system, we have high standards in Birdville ISD. The new system will inform us, but it will not define us. Plans are already in place that continue to make us an innovative district that is responsive to the needs of our students. In addition, it is important for us to continue to tell our story of excellence every chance we get.

Foster Village

7. **Is there any way that the district could fit in a day on the school calendar, at the beginning of the school year, where teachers can meet with parents for conferences (even if it is a half day)?**

A. We are discussing this as a potential option with the future calendars. This is also a conversation to have with campus leadership on how to provide additional time to meet with parents.

8. **With GT being referenced multiple times in the DOI plan, are currently identified fifth-grade GATE students going to be given preferential acceptance to attend the designated STEM campus, North Richland Middle School, in the fall even if they do not reside in that particular feeder pattern?**

A. No. With limited seats available at North Richland Middle, all students not living in the attendance zone will have to apply to attend that campus through the Schools with a Specialization Open Enrollment in March. After April 4, BISD will hold a lottery for those applicants who have met the eligibility criteria.

Francisco

9. **Would schools receive extra funding or personnel if they are designated as a school of choice?**

A. Not necessarily. It depends on the area of specialization. For instance, North Richland Middle School received a grant from the Hudson Foundation and some funds from the District in order to start the teacher training necessary to become STEM certified. In addition, there was a campus certification license that had to be funded. This grant, along with District funds, made it possible for the STEM designation. This is not the case in all instances. The District is strongly encouraging campuses to look for areas of focus that will not be overly costly, disruptive, and/or cumbersome in implementing. We will work with the campuses to help support an approved focus.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Green Valley

10. There have been rumors about a new BISD Professional Learning Center to be built in the near future. Can you confirm this and explain how this new project will be funded as well as the timeline for completion of the project?

A. The Board did approve funds for a Professional Learning Center from the Legacy Fund, which is primarily from oil and gas revenue. The District is currently reviewing options including a timeline for beginning the project. Decisions regarding the details of this project should be shared later this school year.

Porter

11. Will the legislature give us some relief during this session as far as usable dollars for the district?

A. It's too early to gauge what the Legislature will do this session. The revenue projections from the Comptroller were not optimistic. We believe we have support in the House in regard to school finance but not as much in the Senate. We encourage our staff to communicate their support for public education to their State Representatives.

12. Does the district have a plan to help the staff with raises? Inflation is eroding our dollars.

A. Increases in District revenue are derived from predominately two sources: increases in student enrollment and increases in the state basic allotment. For the 2016–17 fiscal year, the State Legislature did not provide increases in the state basic allotment. In addition, we saw a decline in student enrollment. We have been communicating with our Legislators our need for increased state funding during the current Legislative Session. We hope to receive some increases although they may be small. There are efforts underway to help increase enrollment. The Board approved the District to be designated as a District of Innovation a few months ago. As a District of Innovation, we are provided relief from certain state requirements that limit more innovative programs. We will also be telling our “story” better in the future. We have wonderful schools and staff. We plan to ensure that message is conveyed to our community and surrounding areas as parents have more “choice” in regard to their children’s education.

Administration is also working to trim operational costs. We implemented our new energy management program last spring. This program helps us reduce energy costs so those funds can be used in other areas such as staff raises. We also renegotiated a new electricity contract that will begin in June 2017. This will drop our electricity costs around 25 percent for the next few years. As we work through our budget preparation this spring, we will continue to look for ways to minimize other operational costs throughout the District so those savings can be appropriated other places.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Smithfield

13. Is there a computer login/log-on system that is more user-friendly for the students?

- A. We signed an agreement with Encore Systems in December for an authentication and provisioning system to ease the login pain. It should be fully implemented in the fall of 2017.

14. Taking due process into account, is there a smoother process to help those students in General Education who need to be referred to Special Ed or Transition?

- A. We are in the process of working on a Behavioral RtI plan that would help support students who need behavioral support in the general education setting. If the concern is the time line, we must follow Federal guidelines. If the concern is how we can support these students, please work with your principal and counselor to refer you to resources like the Prim in the meantime. Each campus has a copy of this resource.

Snow Heights

15. The staff at Snow Heights would love to see the district address inequalities regarding the following technology resources, some schools still have chalkboards, and infrastructure, there are schools with no head custodian or a much needed full-time assistant principal.

- A. Whiteboard replacements can be requested at budget time and will be prioritized along with the other requests from the campus by the principal and Cabinet. It is true that Snow Heights has no permanent head custodian at this time. We have been working diligently to find a qualified individual for the school, but as of this writing we have not found a person we believe to be reliable and who will give the campus the quality care it deserves to receive. Meanwhile, we have supplemented the vacancy until we can fill the permanent position.

16. We believe that innovation starts from the foundation and works throughout every tenet of our district. We would love to know what our central administrators and school board envision for **how we can all strive to create an equitable and innovative district both financially and instructionally.**

- A. It starts with questioning all of our assumptions and past practices. We have developed a District of Innovation Plan that was approved by the Board of Trustees with community involvement. We looked at the most prevalent constraints that educators must overcome in order to promote learning for all in the most responsive manner possible. Four themes continued to surface: time, responsiveness, innovativeness, and personalization. We will use this plan, which contains actions that speak to each of these themes. We will look for ways to imbed these concepts into current practice, as well as looking at what processes can be implemented if we are willing to do something other than what we are currently doing. Our commitment is to provide equity in all of our services, which by the way is one of the reasons our elementary gifted and talented program had to be revised. We, through the use of data, illustrated how some campuses had less opportunity to provide an equitable elementary

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Snow Heights (#16 cont’d)

gifted and talented program. Thus, we are resolving this inequity by using a more centralized model where we bring third- through fifth-grade students to specific locations within their feeder system. Otherwise, we would continue to accept inequity. This is just one example. Other examples include using more online learning resources so that all students have access to high school courses, dual-credit courses, AP courses, or for that matter, interventions that will improve literacy. The manner in which we can allocate resources to accomplish equity is to critically examine what we are currently doing and then ask the hard questions about abandoning certain practices. For instance, is there something that we are doing, or a resource that we are using, for which we can repurpose time, staff, or money? We absolutely must look at using limited time, limited money, and limited personnel units more effectively and efficiently. Of course, this requires making change and that is not always easy.

The core structure of our budget process provides for equity among campuses. Campus personnel are provided from a staffing formula based on enrollment. Campus budgets are generated based on a per pupil allotment. Title I funds are allocated based on free/reduced lunch counts per federal guidelines. The age of our facilities does create some issues with equity; however, through the 2014 bond program, each campus received some improvements. Technology upgrades and devices were a priority in the bond. Our Technology Department developed a standard for campuses. Through our annual budget process, campuses may request facility, instructional and staffing needs. As funds are available, these requests are prioritized and funded.

Spicer

17. With the district placing a high priority on student attendance, has the district considered revamping our substitute protocol? Many times, teachers are showing up for work ill and exposing students to viruses because there were not enough subs to fill the day’s jobs. Has the district visited with other school districts to see how they handle the substitute shortage? Is pay a factor?

A. Sub shortages have been an issue for the past five years across the nation, and we have talked with other districts who are experiencing the same shortages. We have tried to engage the substitutes more and encouraged schools to create a friendly atmosphere on their campuses. While pay is not always the factor, we try to remain competitive with our substitute pay rates.

We have talked to administrators about coordinating leave and professional development so as to minimize our substitute needs.

The Human Resources department has, in the past, recognized “Substitutes of the Month” and rewarded them with \$5 gift cards. We try to schedule substitute orientations twice a month through April to sustain our pool, as well as build for the upcoming school year.

We will review our substitute pay structure for the 2017–18 school year and make recommendations as the budget allows.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Walker Creek

18. We had a discussion at one of the meetings about possibly changing required grades per six weeks in science/social studies at the elementary level to 8 instead of the current 11 as in all other subjects. **Do you know if that has been discussed in a board meeting yet?**

- A.** The principals agreed that we can reduce the number of science/social studies grades per six weeks. The discussion centered around six to eight grades per six weeks. This is not a Board item.

Watauga

19. Every year, I have one or two newcomers in my bilingual class. The students take their STAAR tests in Spanish and need to do most of their work in Spanish during the school year. We work a lot on English vocabulary as we go, but for the majority of their work, they need Spanish readings. Why is the District not able to provide us with the Math and Science books in Spanish? It seems unfair for the kids to have to have black and white copies. It makes it difficult to understand some of the models we see in Math and in Science. It is also a waste of paper and printer ink to print out the entire book for them. At the end of the year, they have loose packets and the other kids have a book to study from. I understand we have to print the supplemental materials from online, but **could we please get a few Spanish copies of the text books for these newcomers that will test in Spanish?**

- A.** This concern is currently being addressed through the Teaching and Learning Department. Let your principal know if these needs aren't met in a timely manner and we will revisit.

HIGH SCHOOL

Richland

20. Could the Technology Help Desk have staggered staffing with the first employees ready to respond at 6:30-6:45 a.m.? I reported the Skyward outage early but did not get a response until 7:35. The response was not cognizant of the outage. The Skyward website indicates there is support starting at 7AM central time. Euphoria's support desk is available from 7AM central time as well.

- A.** Schedules are already staggered on the Helpdesk which allows it be open at 7 a.m. each day and extend through the 4:30 p.m. close time Monday–Thursday and 4:00 p.m. on Friday's. We are limited on the time we can use Helpdesk staff, as they are non-exempt employees.

So far this school year we have processed 11,463 tickets, of which only a small number (.69%) have been created before 7:00 a.m. (including voicemails). This number is not significant enough to warrant adjusting schedules further. The vast majority of calls outside the regular hours are at the end of the day, and that is where we must keep our limited resources focused.

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HIGH SCHOOL

Richland (#20 cont'd)

The Eduphoria! system is hosted by Eduphoria!, therefore, we cannot monitor it technically. We become aware that the site is down when end-users make us aware of it, or when Eduphoria! informs us it is down.

EXTRA QUESTIONS (Space Permitting)

Binion

21. Emergency cards, would there be a way to print these from Skyward then send them home for parents to just verify that all the information is correct (correct it as needed) then sign and return them?

A. Campuses can print copies of the emergency cards.

Snow Heights

22. Opportunities for increased stipend pay: Secondary teachers currently have multiple opportunities to add to their salary through athletic coaching and academic UIL, whereas elementary teachers do not. Also, our stipends are much smaller in comparison for the extra coaching work we do take on, such as Battle of the Books, Spelling Bee, Choir, etc. This also includes STAAR grade teachers- teachers who teach a testing grade attend many more trainings and complete extra documentation.

A. Principals are given \$900 stipend money to allocate as they choose. We are working to standardize this with principals.