

**Superintendent’s Communications Council
Campus Questions
October 2, 2017**

ELEMENTARY

Binion

1. Are campuses receiving additional leveled libraries for larger campuses that have to share one set?

A. Below is a chart showing the number of leveled library titles purchased in the past.

	Dual Language Campuses		Non-Dual Language Campuses	
	2015	2016	2015	2016
English Titles	135 Titles	74 Titles	135 Titles	74 Titles
Spanish Titles	135 Titles	74 Titles	N/A	N/A

Just recently, campuses were given funds to purchase RtI resources, as well as literacy resources. The funding was based on student enrollment at the beginning of the 2017–2018 school year. This would allow for larger campuses to receive additional funds for such things as the leveled library. Below is a list of resources recommended for purchase with district funds:

- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System
- The Fountas and Pinnell Literacy™ Continuum
- Leveled Library books/Guided Reading books
- Comprehension Toolkit

2. Can we please use our own format for lesson plans?

A. The expectation is that the Workshop Model is used for ELAR, Math and Social Studies and the 5E Model is used for Science. The lesson plan templates provide a format for designing lessons within these models, however, the goal is for teachers to be able to really make them their own. They are welcome to modify the formatting to suit their needs and to align to what they are really doing and how they really plan. While we have provided a template for the Workshop Model, for example, if a teacher has a way to format it differently to help them better plan within the Workshop Model, they are welcome to do so. The principal is the instructional leader of the campus and the authority on what is expected in their lesson plans. As long as the principal approves, the District supports that. The goal of lesson planning in Google is for teachers to be able to plan for what they authentically do – however that needs to look. The self-paced training discusses many tips and tricks that can help teachers customize beyond the templates and Digital Learning Specialists are happy to help support our teachers, too.

Green Valley

3. How much money did the district saved last year due to all the energy saving measures?

A. The District has saved around \$300,000.

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ELEMENTARY (Continued)

Hardeman

4. **Could we PLEASE consider having 9-week grading periods?** I notice many districts changing to this.
- A. This has already been evaluated and answered. It was determined that this was not a change Birdville wants to make.
5. **Would it be possible to have an efficient way to discern the “UPDATED OR CHANGED” information in the district handbook & RtI handbook from the prior year (as in, highlighting changes from one year to the next)?**

- A. I believe that due to the volume of handbooks, code of conduct booklets, and RtI manuals that we would continue to post the documents as we have and explain the significant changes to the campus administration that would be responsible for communicating to campus staff.

Teaching and Learning can only speak to the RtI Handbook. Since the RtI handbook is housed in Google, we have the ability to make changes throughout the year as they are needed. We are able to highlight additions to the handbook. We would not be able to highlight any deletions to the manual. We will consider this suggestion as we move forward with any new additions to the RtI handbook.

Porter

6. This semester there are eight after school trainings for ELAR teachers (Writing Assessment Scoring, Writing Support for 3rd and 4th Grade, and the Fountas and Pinnell Classroom™). While these are all beneficial trainings for us, and we see the value in providing times when we do not have to be out of the classroom, this is a lot of time we are being pulled away from our families. **In the future, could some of these be placed on Webinar or other online options?** In the past, Teresa Lawson has done that and it was helpful. This, combined with fall parent conferences, has put a lot of additional hours on teachers.

- A. Yes. Teaching and Learning has provided online training for many of our face-to-face professional learning opportunities. For example, this year we presented *BOLD: Building Opportunities for Literacy Daily* face-to-face to all teachers and administrators. We also created and made available an online version for those who were unable to attend the required session or who wanted a refresher. Information on how to access these files is available through your campus principal. We will continue to add online learning pieces as our capacity allows.

Smithfield

7. With the district literacy initiative for this school year, the content coordinators have already provided suggestions and activities for literacy in each of their content areas. With the current requirements for minutes in the four content areas and this call for increased literacy, integration is vital. **Will the content coordinators be collaborating as they plan future units to ensure maximum cross-curricular integration and literacy opportunities?**

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ELEMENTARY (cont’d)

Smithfield (#7 cont’d)

- A. The Teaching and Learning department will continue to provide strategies in the content areas that will support students in accessing the content through reading. However, with the rigorous requirements of some content standards, direct teaching is necessary especially in the upper grades in science, social studies, and math. The ELAR and Social Studies Coordinators continue to work together to show ways to integrate the curriculum.

Snow Heights

- 8. **What strategies or solutions can the district offer on how to implement technology during workstations with 4 laptops per room?** The iPads don't automatically log on to programs like Xtra Math or Google Classroom, so they become more of a hassle. **Are there any solutions to help the iPads be more accessible for students?**

- A. The Encore Single Sign-on solution we are implementing now works on desktops, iPads, and Chromebooks, as it is web-based, and the software it launches and logs into automatically is web-based. Web-based software solutions have commonalities that Encore leverages, allowing affordable implementation of automated login. However, some web-based software products have unique login schemes, such as Xtra Math, that prevent a single sign-on scheme or make it unaffordably difficult.

We are currently working on Google Classroom and other Google applications to implement the Encore login. Since Google operates as its own ecosystem, we have to make it “talk” to our Microsoft ecosystem to allow authentication for login. This is a lengthy process, as we have customized both ecosystems to the specific needs of Birdville ISD.

Unfortunately, there are no solutions available for the iPads or desktop computers for automatically logging into native software applications. The “native applications,” those designed to run only on the device they are programmed for, are not candidates for automatic login (the reason why is a lengthy discussion). Chromebooks have no native applications, so there is no issue with them.

The choice of using iPads and the balance between tablets and laptops in the classroom was a compromise based on several needs expressed to us as the district planned the last bond. If the most appropriate use of classroom technology requires more laptops or a balance in favor of laptops, the principals should inform Lorene Ownby, Clarence Simmons, and Jaimie Smith of this. They will inform the Technology Department, the Cabinet, the Board, and the next Bond Committee on the future direction of device purchases.

- 9. **Does the district consider starting school on a Thursday and not a Monday? Starting with a full week is hard for students and teachers.**

- A. This item will be presented to the calendar committee for consideration when it meets this semester to consider the 2018–19 school year.

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Spicer

10. We are very pleased to have the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment 1 Kits for 1st grade and 2nd grade for BOY testing. This assessment will be very beneficial in guiding us to place our students in the appropriate texts for instruction. However, we are encountering problems and concerns in administering the assessment with fidelity.

- In order to use the assessment effectively, teachers needed more training and they needed to have it before school started.
- Having only one kit per grade level makes assessment difficult because teachers need to use the same book at the same time and there is only one copy of each book per kit.
- The time that it takes to assess a student can take 30 minutes to an hour and a half or more. It is a challenge to assess each student one-on-one at the beginning of the year while making sure that the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful independent work and/or activities. During the first several weeks of school, teachers are putting systems into place and setting expectations and procedures. Students are also taking other BOY assessments such as Istation and Star 360[®].
- The district allots four copies per student per day. The copies needed for the F&P Benchmark Assessment range from a minimum of 8 pages to 20+ pages per student depending on how many levels the student reads to determine his/her Instructional Level.

We wanted to bring these concerns to the attention of curriculum and instruction, so that we can implement this in the best possible way in the future.

A. The Teaching and Learning department has addressed each concern below as follows:

“In order to use the assessment effectively, teachers needed more training and they needed to have it before school started.” *Please see response to Watauga Elementary regarding the timing of implementation on page five of this Q & A.*

“Having only one kit per grade level makes assessment difficult because teachers need to use the same book at the same time and there is only one copy of each book per kit.” *Teaching and Learning purchased three Fountas & Pinnell Assessment Kit 1 for each campus except on larger campuses where four kits were purchased. Additionally, we bought one Kit 2 for each campus. This was all the budget allowed for at the end of 2016–2017 and beginning of 2017–2018. The plan is to purchase additional kits for campuses in the future.*

“The time that it takes to assess a student can take 30 minutes to an hour and a half or more. It is a challenge to assess each student one-on-one at the beginning of the year while making sure that the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful independent work and/or activities. During the first several weeks of school, teachers are putting systems into place and setting expectations and procedures. Students are also taking other BOY assessments such as Istation and Star 360[®].”

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ELEMENTARY (cont’d)

Spicer (#10 cont’d)

Teaching and Learning realizes the amount of time it is taking for each student. This was the reason for the five-week progress monitoring plan as described in the assessment calendar and RtI Handbook. In addition, the five-week window was extended to six weeks for this first time. Once we have a system in place where teachers know a student’s reading level and become more familiar with the assessment, the amount of time per student will decrease.

“The District allots four copies per student per day. The copies needed for the F&P Benchmark Assessment range from a minimum of 8 pages to 20+ pages per student depending on how many levels the student reads to determine his/her Instructional Level.”
Teaching and Learning is in the process of having copies made for the campuses for the MOY and EOY. We will have copies available at the beginning of 2018–2019.

Watauga

11. When pushing through updates to procedures, expectations, and curriculum district-wide, why are all of the pieces not fully formed and ready to share with us in May? As a collection of professionals, we typically spend a significant amount of the summer attending professional learning sessions and preparing for the coming school year. For instance, the Google Drive pieces of Lesson Planning and Canvas were revealed to us in little pieces throughout the year last year. We had training pieces offered to us in May and throughout the summer and again in August. None of that was new to us coming into the school year. We were given plenty of time to work in our learning and understanding of these new procedures and expectations.

Conversely, the new ELA expectations were not something we were aware of the magnitude of the changes ahead of time. We had opportunities to go to Guided Reading training over the summer and we had some Literacy Framework work exposed to us last year, but to come back in August and learn that there is a new assessment that we will all have to be trained on ASAP, there are limited kits for us, the kits do not assess our highest learners unless our campus purchases the next level kits ASAP, the expectations include the Fountess & Pinnell leveling which we are not all proficient in our understanding, and the curriculum itself with all the extra pieces and papers of addendums takes us hours to go through and figure out what we’re supposed to be doing. This is serious, important work that should never be thrown at the teachers during the first few weeks of school. We already work very hard, long hours on our classroom needs.

A. The Teaching and Learning Department began the roll-out of the new ELAR Framework in January of 2017. At that time, we offered professional learning regarding the ELAR Framework to campuses, and we visited with many, but not all campuses.

In addition, we began a pilot with Smithfield Elementary in January to look at an assessment plan that would provide the necessary data for RtI purposes, as well as a plan that would inform literacy instruction. This included assessing students using the TPRI, Observation Survey by Marie Clay, and the DRA2. During this time, we discovered the DRA2 was an outdated (2004) resource and began looking at the new Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Watauga (#11 cont'd)

Assessment Kit 1 (2017) for grades K–2. During the spring, we began the work of aligning all of the pieces to reflect our work on the literacy assessment pilot at Smithfield. This included aligning the ELAR Framework, the RtI Handbook, the assessment plan and testing calendar, and professional learning for principals, coaches, and teachers.

While the Teaching and Learning department understands the timing for implementing the new assessment was not ideal, we also knew we could not wait a year to implement. We highly respect the hard work and effort our teachers are doing every day. This work is hard, and there is a learning curve for our teachers. The goal for Teaching and Learning is to provide all of our students with the best instruction and teachers with the best resources and support to meet their students' needs. If we do this, our students will leave our system with the skills necessary to be empowered learners, responsible citizens, global competitors, and innovative entrepreneurs. In our hearts, we believe not only in the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, but all aspects of the BOLD choices we have made in the alignment to our District Literacy Initiative: Building Opportunities for Literacy Daily.

12. Bilingual teachers attended many of the same professional development courses as the monolingual teachers this summer and into the beginning of the year. However, in multiple sessions the bilingual teachers were told “this does not pertain to you.” There is confusion in that the bilingual and monolingual teachers are held accountable to many, if not all, of the same expectations. When we are not offered professional learning catered to the bilingual program and bilingual classroom, then the district's professional learning should be made appropriate for both monolingual and bilingual. We should not be told “this does not pertain to you” if there is nothing else that is offered.

In the same vein, our bilingual classes are held accountable to testing pieces and making academic progress just as our monolingual counterparts. With a lack of appropriate bilingual-based professional learning and a “this doesn't pertain to you” stance of district monolingual professional learning, add to that we do not have the same types of resources that our monolingual peers have. We are asked to attend the Benchmark Assessment training yet there are no kits for us to use to actually do the assessment. When will our kits be purchased? Sometime in November.

The lack of professional learning, resources, and assessment tools makes the bilingual program feel very much like an after-thought rather than an equal partner in the educational program and academic & assessment processes. We do not feel that our teachers, and thus students, have equal access to materials and programs as our monolingual peers. **What is the district's stance on how we can move to a more equitable program and meet the needs of our bilingual learners and get the needed professional learning, resources and assessment materials to our teachers?**

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ELEMENTARY (cont'd)

Watauga (#12 cont'd)

- A. The District wanted to wait until the new coordinator for DL/ESL had an opportunity to evaluate the current assessments and collaborate with Teaching and Learning to determine the best assessment resource for our dual language teachers. She also wanted to make sure we were not over assessing our bilingual students.

It was determined that the District would purchase the Fountas and Pinnell Spanish benchmark assessment and they were ordered immediately.

The Coordinator informed principals to include their dual language teachers in the F&P English training in order for them to be prepared once we received the Spanish materials. Additional training will be provided in October.

It is the goal of the Dual Language/ESL department to work closely with Teaching and Learning this year to ensure that all teachers, general education and dual language, have equitable and appropriate resources and professional learning.

HIGH SCHOOL

Birdville

13. Chaos happens in the morning and afternoon with all the traffic from both BHS and Walker Creek and people trying to enter/exit the Faculty Parking Lot. **Is there a possibility of making another exit from our lot onto Mid Cities closer to the pond?** It would allow those people who want to go toward Precinct Line to exit without causing such a backup at the exit.
- A. These types of projects require approval from the City of NRH. District staff have contacted the City to determine if an additional drive could be considered. In the meantime, the District is reviewing the traffic conditions at the intersection of Hawk and Mid-Cities.
14. **I've been wondering why we continue to spend the money to print (paper, ink, time) and distribute progress reports and report cards when most students/parents have Skyward access, especially when students recycle (or trash) them as soon as they receive them.** Also, they aren't a true representation of the student's grade, because most of the time, the IPR grade changes after capture, so that means 3 days later when the IPR is distributed, that grade is different.
- A. Current Board Policy EIA (LOCAL) stipulates that, "The District shall issue grade reports/report cards every six weeks on a form approved by the Superintendent or designee." In addition, the policy stipulates that, "Interim progress reports shall be issued for all students after the third week of each grading period. Supplemental progress reports may be issued at the teacher's discretion." A survey was conducted two years ago at the high school level to obtain information about students who had internet access at home or if the family had a cell phone that could access the internet. The results of the survey indicated at all of the high school campuses that not all of the students had internet access at home or had a cell phone that could access the internet.

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HIGH SCHOOL (cont'd)

Haltom

15. As a coach, I was wondering if it is possible to get staff ID cards that are small and could fit on our key chains in place of wearing our ID out to practice where it can get damaged and/or lost?

- A. This is technically possible and would be relatively inexpensive (\$5 per key fob). However, this substantially increases the workload of the help desk to manage the provisioning of new and lost key fobs. There are some increased security concerns with the existence of door access devices without names and pictures that someone can steal from a keyring, and the missing fob possibly go unnoticed for a substantial time. We will share this with Cabinet for a decision.

Richland

16. I would like clarification on the sick bank. When we originally established it years ago, the idea was that employees who had chronic diseases, like cancer, would be supported as they took days off for chemo, etc. However, one of our teachers has been told that it will only cover long-continuous absences. This seems counterintuitive as we would hope that teachers would make an effort to come to work as often as possible, if for no other reason than to touch base with their students and subs.

- A. Sick leave days may be granted for intermittent leave. Here are excerpts from our sick bank guidelines:

“2. Days may be used from the Bank only after the member has exhausted all accumulated state, local, and vacation leave days.

3. Bank days shall be granted for an absence from work of five (5) or more consecutive days. The only exception shall be intermittent leave for treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation, dialysis and the like.”

Please ask the effected employee to contact the Director of Business to address any concerns.