



Instructional Consultation Meeting

MINUTES

October 28, 2021

Agenda Review: November 4, 2021
Board Meeting Date: November 11, 2021

Attendees: Dr. Rick Cruz, Deputy Superintendent; Elneita Hutchins-Taylor, General Counsel; Catosha Woods, Deputy General Counsel; Dr. Denise Watts, Chief of Schools; Wanda Paul, Chief Operating Officer; Pedro Lopez, Chief of Police; Garland Blackwell, Chief Audit Executive; Teresa Corrigan, Director, Ethics & Compliance; August Hamilton, Executive Officer, Deputy Supt.; Dr. Jharrett Bryantt, Ex. Officer, Talent Acquisition and Perf. Mngmt.; Bridget Moore, Gen. Mngr., HR Business & Financial Ops.; Alishia Jolivette, Officer, Facility Services; Candice Castillo, Ex. Officer, Student Support; Emily Smith, Director, Chief of Staff; Julia Dimmitt, Asst. Supt.; Dr. Allison Matney, Ex. Officer, Research & Accountability; Jackie Anderson, HFT; Andy Dewey, HFT; Daniel Santos, HFT; Sonia Gonzalez, HFT; James Faber, HFT; Thomas Norris, HFT; Gertrude Hilty, HFT; Steve Antley, CHT

Facilitator: Tonnis Hilliard

Items Requiring Consultation: AGENDA REVIEW AGENDA

K-1	APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY CAA(LOCAL), FISCAL MANAGEMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: FINANCIAL ETHICS—FIRST READING	Ethics and Compliance Garland Blackwell Teresa Corrigan
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Ms. Corrigan presented this item and stated that the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) recommended a change to clarify that reports of suspected impropriety may be made to a person who has authority to investigate the alleged activity, in addition to the other individuals listed in the policy, which aligns the district's policy with Education Code 37.148. The district administration recommends updates to align with changes in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) rules, and to reflect that the Houston Independent School District AlertLine is now called the Ethics Hotline.

No questions or further discussion.

K-2	APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY CLB(LOCAL), BUILDINGS, GROUNDS, AND EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT: MAINTENANCE—FIRST READING	Business Operations Wanda Paul Alishia Jolivette
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Ms. Jolivette presented this item and stated that this policy is being updated per TASB's recommendation. Updates include the additional definition of what the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program is, what the district's commitment is, and elaboration of what the coordinator is responsible for. There is no cost or staffing implications.

Mr. Dewey asked if the coordinator had been named yet.

Ms. Jolivette said there is an IPM manager who is the pest control manager, but the IPM coordinator could be anyone in that department and anyone in addition.

Mr. Dewey asked if there was a direct person to contact for when they start hearing from members about pests in their classrooms.

Ms. Jolivette said they would follow the same process for maintenance requests and contact the customer care center, where work requests would be routed to the pest control team who would dispatch a team to mitigate the issue.

Mr. Dewey said it sounded like a long process.

Ms. Jolivette said the policy is being updated but the process is the same.

No further discussion.

K-6	APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY FNF(LOCAL), STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES—FIRST READING	Chief Of Police Pedro Lopez
<p>Chief Lopez presented this item and stated that updates to this policy were per TASB's recommendations and changes include 1) Changing the subtitle from Interrogations and Searches to Investigation and Searches 2) Affirmation that district officials other than police officers may question students and that students don't have a right to refuse an answer based on the right to incriminate themselves 3) Informing students that they have no expectation of privacy in district property, that such property may be searched at any time without notice, and that students are responsible for any prohibited items found in district property provided to them 4) Adding general search provisions outlining the district's authority to conduct searches in accordance with law and in a reasonable and nondiscriminatory manner and 5) Updating information about the use of metal detectors and trained dogs.</p> <p>Mr. Dewey asked if this required a change in the student code of conduct.</p> <p>Mr. Lopez said no, not to his knowledge.</p> <p>Mr. Dewey asked what the disciplinary measures would be if a student refused to answer questions.</p> <p>Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said it would probably be commensurate with whatever the circumstances were.</p> <p>Mr. Dewey said he believed this was a Level 3, failure to comply with the administrator and said he would like to see how this tied into the current state of the student code of conduct.</p> <p>Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said it wasn't in that area, generally for each level there was a range of consequences students may be subject to. They would have to look at the circumstances in each case. She added that she would provide Mr. Dewey with what the consequences are when a student doesn't cooperate with the administration.</p> <p>No further discussion.</p>		
K-7	APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY GKA(LOCAL), COMMUNITY RELATIONS: CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PREMISES—FIRST READING	Chief Of Police Pedro Lopez

Chief Lopez presented this item and stated that updates to this policy were per TASB's recommendations. Revisions include: 1) Updates to information about refusing a person entry to or ejecting a person from property under the district's control 2) Clarification that district personnel may request assistance from law enforcement in some circumstances; and 3) Adding a section about a person's right to appeal a refusal of entry or an ejection with information about the appeal process.

Mr. Dewey asked if a list of criteria would be applied for denying someone entry into the building.

Chief Lopez said it would be whether the person was committing a criminal act, disrupting proceedings or trespassing.

Mr. Dewey said he understood being evicted or ejected but asked about just being denied entry.

Ms. Anderson asked if this was for all events that are on district property which included school board meetings.

Chief Lopez answered yes, any district property under district control.

Ms. Woods said the district's buildings are public buildings, but the public doesn't have free access to them so this allows the district to place reasonable guards around who could enter a building. There are additional guards if the behavior is inappropriate or if it caused substantial risk or injury.

Mr. Dewey said he would like to see an itemized list of the criteria instead of leaving it to the judgment of 280 principals.

Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said it would be impossible to come up with an exhaustive list of reasons and schools could generally regulate time, place and manner of various behaviors. When it is a law enforcement situation the police officers on site would make the determination, but there would also be some circumstances that don't involve the police department where it would be the campus administrator that would make the decision.

Mr. Dewey said he understood but didn't want the word reasonable to be left open where it could be arbitrary.

Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said this was always subject to not doing things that are unlawful and guidelines certainly would not be based on gender, race or any kind of discriminatory reasons. She reiterated that they could not create an exhaustive list of all the circumstances that might come up and asked that specific incidents be shared to discuss.

Ms. Anderson gave an example of a principal not allowing entry because they thought they were not dressed appropriately.

Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said they would have to look at the specific circumstances. Some schools have guidelines that are posted.

Mr. Dewey said he would like to have the opportunity, in a collaborative manner, come up with a policy where they could draw the rules correctly instead of given a policy that seems unenforceable.

Ms. Hutchins-Taylor said that might work appropriate for a regulation.

Ms. Anderson asked again if her example of inappropriate dress would fall under this policy.

Chief Lopez said yes, it gives the main administrator in charge authority to refuse entry based on reasonableness, which was broad, but the answer is yes.

Ms. Anderson thanked Chief Lopez.

No further discussion.

Items Requiring Consultation: REGULAR BOE AGENDA

D-1	APPROVAL OF FALL 2021 CLASS-SIZE WAIVER REQUESTS	Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Allison Matney
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Dr. Matney presented this item and stated they are required to monitor the annual fall class size waiver request and have to submit class sizes that are over 22 in grades K through 4 and Pre-K per a new law that went into effect in September.

Mr. Dewey asked for a copy of the list of individual schools asking for waivers as they have received in the past.

Dr. Matney said she would provide.

Mr. Faber said he was glad that Pre-K was now represented in class size waivers because it is a big problem in Kindergarten. Mr. Faber added that the best practices according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is a ten to one ratio to staff to students. He asked what would be done about getting the class size for Pre-K back down.

Dr. Matney said that getting that number down to eleven to one was one of the board constraints for the superintendent and also House Bill 3 states this is for an identified certified teacher not a paraprofessional, so if a classroom had 23 students and a teacher and paraprofessional, that classroom would be subject to a class size waiver. The board has put a focus on this making sure of best practices and incorporating high quality Pre-K indicators specifically around what House Bill 3 outlined.

Mr. Faber said he hoped paraprofessionals in Pre-K classes become more common. He added that in his opinion having 25 to 26 students in a Pre-K class is a health risk at a time where there's supposed to be distancing and mask wearing.

Mr. Santos asked how committed HISD was to ensure the ratio of 11 to one in Pre-K classes.

Dr. Matney said the district is very committed from the board level all the way down to the Pre-K Director and classroom level. She added that they have partnered with several organizations and pointed out key information in constraint 5 and 5.2.

Mr. Santos said the urgency was a concern to him and he agreed with what Mr. Faber expressed about this being a safety issue. He added that this was unsafe, unprofessional, and unethical and he hoped with the support of the superintendent we could meet the goal before this semester. He looked forward to receiving an update.

No further discussion.

Note: The 2021- Board Waiver Report was provided to HFT consultation members via email from Evelia Velazco, Ex. Admin. Asst., on behalf of Dr. Matney on November 2, 2021.

D-3	APPROVAL OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS FOR THE 2021–2022 SCHOOL YEAR	Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Allison Matney
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Dr. Matney presented this item and stated that these are the corresponding performance objective summaries to the district improvement plan performance and performance objectives that were presented last month. It is an annual requirement.

No questions or further discussion.

Regulation

BMI(REGULATION)	Chief of Schools Dr. Denise Watts
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Dr. Watts presented this item and stated that this was a change to the regulation formerly known as Ad-Hoc to reset the opportunity where principals have a monthly opportunity to meet with the superintendent to share concerns and questions and also present the opportunity for principals to provide even greater district leadership and have input on problems or practice at the district level. This aligns with the superintendent's leadership collaborative and the district's level priorities and strategic plan. The committee membership would be by elections to ensure a wide range of schools would be represented by type of school, grade level, etc. Meetings would be held twice a month, one being with the superintendent.

Mr. Dewey asked if this would supersede Administrative Consultation.

Dr. Watts said this did not supersede Administrative Consultation and what they're trying to accomplish was for the most innovative principals to come to the table as thought partners to help think through challenges. This would also be presented at the next Administrative Consultation meeting.

Mr. Santos asked how deliberate the process for appointments would be to ensure that principals are selected from various regions of the district.

Dr. Watts said it would be very deliberate and every step would be taken to make sure all levels are represented and vetted which is one of the reasons the superintendent would have eight designations that he could make outside of the elected process.

No further discussion.

HFT Items

<p>HFT 1</p>	<p><u>School Discipline</u></p> <p>Several teachers have reported that the district has imposed a moratorium on suspensions - especially in middle and elementary schools in order to facilitate Restorative Justice Practices.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is this claim accurate? b. If the claim is inaccurate, HFT requests the number of students who have been suspended (OSS and ISS) thus far. c. How does the current number of suspended (OSS and ISS) students compare to two years ago (pre-pandemic) at this time of the school year? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Several teachers have reported that they are instructed not to lock their doors during the day.</i> • <i>A teacher was also hit at Navarro MS and the student was "rejected" by DAEP. How is this possible?</i> • <i>Waltrip has experienced several brawls. Students were hurt and arrested. A teacher was hit, and one was bit by a student while she was trying to break up a fight. In addition, an administrator was pushed to the ground and hit. Last week, three policemen were on campus, during a brawl one was knocked to the ground. Furthermore 3 guns were confiscated on Tuesday after a brawl occurred.</i> 	<p>Chief of Schools Dr. Denise Watts Julia Dimmitt</p>
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Written Response:

The district has not prohibited schools from using ISS or OSS in response to disciplinary infractions. Principals have discretion to apply these consequences as needed with consideration to the specific circumstances involved in the situation. I am working on getting the discipline data for this year in comparison to previous years.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Watts said she found no evidence that any communication had been formally or informally made about the imposed moratorium on discipline or suspension.

Mr. Dewey said they keep hearing it from around the district, so it is coming from somewhere. He shared a text message he received that had descriptions of dress code violations not being able to enforce the dress code. He added that for discipline it seemed as if principals don't want to suspend students because it would show up as a suspension.

Dr. Watts said she could not comment on the narrative that people are sharing and reiterated that after a careful analysis, no evidence was found that said there was a moratorium on suspensions. She requested any evidence be shared.

No further discussion.

HFT 2	<u>HISD Board Meetings</u> It appears that Agenda Review is being used as an actual meeting to adopt policies and take formal votes. HFT requests policies in advance (several days) to review and analyze.	Chief of Staff Silvia Trinh Emily Smith
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Written Response:

Board Policies are being brought for first reading at agenda review. Policies require a 1st and a 2nd reading before they are voted on and approved by the board. We are bringing policies for 1st reading at agenda review and for 2nd reading at the board meeting to ensure we are updating our policies on a monthly basis. Otherwise, we would do first reading at board meeting and 2nd reading at the following month board reading, meaning the process to revise and approve a policy would take 2 months. We will ensure you receive policies 2 days before consultation.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Dewey said this used to happen occasionally but now it is happening monthly giving them less time to contact their relevant members to review.

Ms. Smith said they were working on a process to provide the markups at least a day or two prior to the meeting.

Ms. Gonzalez said they received the markups hours before the meeting and requested they all agree to send two days before.

Ms. Hilliard said they would commit to at least two days prior.

No further discussion.

HFT 3	<u>Reassignment of Teachers</u> What criteria is being used to determine which teachers are reassigned due to low enrollment?	Chief of Schools Dr. Denise Watts
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Written Response:

The principal designates the grade level/content area from which the reduction in staff should take place based on enrollment. Within that department/grade level, teachers' district hiring date is used to determine the specific teacher to be reassigned. The APR (district seniority report) is used to determine the district hire date. Reassignments are not based on how long a teacher has been on a campus.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Watts acknowledged that changes that are made after the school year starts are difficult and understands that they take a toll on the individual being moved, other teachers, students, and families. This is a tough process but a needed process to try to match enrollment with the number of teachers budgeted to be at a school. She went over the criteria as stated in the written response and added that she requested from the School Support Officers and the Assistant Superintendents a better process of giving families notification and better transition period for the individual giving them time to close out in the current school, one to two days and then time to adequately transition.

Ms. Gonzalez asked if any effort was made to reassign teachers to schools within the same feeder pattern because most calls are from teachers who said they were being moved across town.

Dr. Watts answered yes, every effort was made to do so but it was not always possible so she could not say It was done with 100% fidelity across the board.

No further discussion.

HFT 4	<u>School Guidelines</u> a. As of today, the HISD website does not contain the school guidelines for the current year. b. HFT requests a copy of the school guidelines for 2021-2022	Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Allison Matney
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Written Response:

Starting this school year, the guidelines were moved to an internal HISD SharePoint site. This move makes it easier for staff to search the information, and access resources for their work. The Guidelines are no longer posted on the website given this new format.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Matney added that they are investigating the possibility of giving consultation members who are outside HISD access to the data in the district's Sharepoint using their email addresses or finding an easy way to export. She said she would provide as soon as possible.

No further discussion.

HFT 5	<u>District Advisory Committee</u> a. Are Diagnosticians able to run for the central office staff positions? b. Does the Central Office Staff category include positions such as Diagnosticians, LSSP's and speech pathologists? If not, what positions are eligible to be elected as central office staff for the DAC?	Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Allison Matney
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Written Response:

- a. Yes
- b. Yes, it includes these positions. The requirement for central office staff positions is not based on title or position, it is based on pay grade. All central office employees with a pay range between 25 – 37 are eligible for nomination. These positions are on the teacher pay scale, but if they transferred to the master pay scale, they would transfer as a 28, making them eligible.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Matney recapped what was stated in the written response.

No questions or further discussion.

HFT 6	<p><u>Nurses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. With respect to COVID testing, HFT requests clarification (see attachment)<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Which are the select schools where COVID testing is taking place? HFT requests a list of the select schools.ii. HFT is requesting a copy of the full plan for testing students and processes for transporting testing materials to labs.iii. How were nurses' input incorporated into said plan?iv. To what extent are nurses' concerns informing any changes to said plan?b. Nurse Mentorship<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. What are the qualifications of a nurse mentor and their responsibilities?ii. How are nurse mentors selected? HFT requests a copy of the rubric for selection of potential nurse mentors.iii. How much are nurse mentors compensated for mentorship? Do they receive a stipend?iv. How frequently is the nurse mentorship program evaluated and to what degree are nurses' feedback informing changes?c. Wastewater Study<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. What is the purpose and/or goal of the wastewater study? How will these goals/outcomes be obtained?ii. What exactly are nurses expected to do with respect to the Wastewater Study?iii. What are the district's plans/protocols for conducting the Wastewater Study? HFT requests a copy of this plan.d. Nurse Assignments<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. We have been informed that some campuses are sharing nurses: How many school campuses are without a full-time nurse?ii. What is the plan to minimize the number of campuses without a full-time nurse? What strategies are incorporated in such a plan? (e.g. Recruitment bonuses? Nurse referrals sign-on bonus? Retired nurses pool?)e. HFT requests a special Nurses Consultation monthly meeting.	<p>Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Candice Castillo</p>
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Written Response:

- a.
- i. The City of Houston identified schools in communities with a high prevalence of COVID-19 and/or low vaccinates and is prioritizing those schools for inclusion in the surveillance testing program. Please see attached list of schools
 - ii. The MOU, while approved by the board, is still in the works. A full plan will be available after the MOU is fully signed. The MOU is centered around having the testing partner conduct testing at the school site, take the testing sample back to their lab, communicate the results to the parent/caregiver, and provide a report to the school to notify of any positive case.
 - iii. My understanding is that previous leadership had discussions about it.
 - iv. I have not been made aware of any nurses' concerns regarding the testing program.
- b.
- i. Managers identify and invite campus nurses with 3-5 years of school nursing experience to consider being a newly hired school nurse mentor. The responsibilities of the mentor are to encourage, review topics from new nurse orientation, visit the new nurse on her/ his campus when possible, and have the new nurse shadow the mentor when possible. The mentor answers questions regarding HISD policies and procedures and discusses the alignment of the policies and procedures with BON's RN Scope of Practice and the Nurse Practice Act for RN.
 - ii. Nurse Mentors are invited based on their managers' campus visit assessments. (I Auditor Percentage Scores) and campus principal's annual appraisal feedback.
 - iii. There is no monetary compensation for nurse mentors. They do not receive stipend or any other compensation for their mentorship.
 - iv. Being this a volunteer-based program, there is not a formal evaluation for the mentor. Nurse mentors from the previous year provide verbal comments regarding mentees from the previous years. At that time, most nurse mentors indicate if they would like to participate in the future.
- c.
- i. The wastewater study is a Houston Health Department initiative analyzing wastewater samples collected from 58 HISD schools to monitor for COVID-19 virus levels. Samples are collected weekly from manhole covers that are specific to the school, meaning no other wastewater is part of the collection. The samples are to two separate labs and tested two to three times each. At the conclusion of testing each week, schools are labeled High Positive, Positive, Inconclusive, or Negative. In regard to obtaining goals/outcomes, that's a question for the Houston Health Department. In HISD, we are utilizing the data to contrast and compare their findings to our reported data and review additional mitigation efforts to minimize the spread of the virus.
 - ii. Nothing specifically at this time. We will be reviewing our reported data and comparing to the wastewater testing results to review our mitigation strategies, especially in any campus labeled as high positive.
 - iii. The wastewater testing program is not an HISD-led program; therefore, there are not any established HISD protocols at this time. We are using data from this testing program the same way we utilize other available local COVID-19 data tools.
- d.
- i. Health and Medical Services have not made assignments for campuses to share nurses. Currently, there are 18 posted full-time vacancies.
 - ii. The department has been working diligently in collaboration with the district's recruitment process to hire nurses, including recruitment and advertising strategies in LinkedIn, Indeed, Texas Nurse Association, HCC, Region IV, Twitter, Facebook, NextNurse, Medical Jobboard US, Council of Great City Schools. Retired nurse pools often are interested in hourly positions. We have posted 5 additional hourly nurse positions.
- e. At this time, Instructional Consultation is the process through which nurse concerns are able to be addressed on a monthly basis through the consultation process.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Castillo gave a recap of the written responses.

Mr. Dewey asked if it was a funding issue or lack of leadership in the department on why mentors don't get a stipend or pay.

Ms. Castillo said it could be a combination of elements and added that she is committed to looking into the opportunity to make improvements in the department and look for funding. Ms. Castillo said she welcomed feedback and recommendations and is open to collaborate on processes.

Ms. Anderson thanked Ms. Castillo for the work she has been doing with the nurses and said she gave the superintendent high kudos about her. Ms. Anderson said the nurses appreciate the work she has been doing.

Ms. Castillo thanked Ms. Anderson.

Dr. Cruz echoed what Ms. Anderson said and asked if they were aware of the recent nurses' stipend.

Ms. Anderson said yes and thanked him and added that they need to work on making that permanent.

No further discussion.

HFT 7	<u>HB4545 Tutorials</u> Effective the week of Nov. 1, the teacher extra-duty pay rate for academic tutorials will be increased from \$25 to \$50 per hour. a. What are the eligibility requirements? HFT requests a copy of the eligibility requirements. b. Recently, a third-grade teacher was informed by her campus principal that she does not qualify for this additional pay because she is not providing Accelerated Learning to students who have previously failed STAAR. (As a 3rd grade teacher, her students do not have STAAR data because this is the first tested grade.) - Is her principal's interpretation of eligibility for extra duty pay for academic tutorials accurate?	Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Jharrett Bryantt
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WRITTEN RESPONSE:

a. \$50 per hour is the rate of extra duty pay for direct academic instruction and tutoring to students after teacher duty hours. Eligible staff are those on the teacher pay table, which include staff such as teachers, dyslexia interventionists, and instructional specialists, provided that they are providing academic tutorials or instruction to students after teacher duty hours.

b. A teacher is eligible to receive the \$50 per hour rate for direct instruction/tutoring that occur outside of teacher duty hours for any students, regardless of STAAR eligibility and scores. In the scenario described in this question, the teacher should have been eligible for the \$50/hour rate.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Bryantt gave a recap of the written response.

No questions or further discussion.

<p>HFT 8</p>	<p><u>Progress Monitoring Forms and Paper Reduction Act</u></p> <p>a. Teachers at Westbury HS are being asked to complete weekly/bi-weekly Progress Monitoring Forms for students who qualify for Tier II and Tier III interventions. (attachment). How do the Progress Monitoring Forms comply with the Paper Reduction Act if teachers are claiming the data collected is redundant and time-consuming?</p>	<p>Chief of Schools Dr. Denise Watts Julia Dimmitt</p>
<p>WRITTEN RESPONSE: The assistant superintendent has worked with the teachers at Westbury to resolve this issue. To resolve it, teachers will receive extra duty pay when completing these tasks outside of duty time. Teachers agreed to this resolution.</p> <p>DISCUSSION:</p> <p>Dr. Watts gave a recap of the written statement.</p> <p>Mr. Dewey said extra duty pay is great but making people work beyond their regular hours on a permanent basis is not something they could agree to, but he would follow-up with the Westbury teachers.</p> <p>Dr. Watts thanked Mr. Dewey for the feedback.</p> <p>No further discussion.</p>		
<p>HFT 9</p>	<p><u>Paraprofessionals</u></p> <p>a. Follow up question to a prior Paras concern regarding covering classes when a teacher is absent: In a recent HISD response, it was stated that Paras may cover for up to two days in case of emergency. Where is this written with respect to extended time periods (e.g. a day or two)? How does the extended period of time - "a day or two" meet the definition of "emergency"? (HFT Item #8 in the last Special Ed Consultation). How are students receiving qualified instruction if the extended time period includes two days?</p> <p>b. Is the stipend for Special Ed T.A.s temporary (i.e. only available as long ESSER funds are available, or will it be a part of the HISD budget)?</p> <p>c. Several TAs at mid-level range (10 to 20 years of experience/compensation) have not yet advanced to a higher compensation level or are recognized with longevity bonuses. Similar to teachers, how can competitive compensation plans be included for TAs? On the master salary schedule, are the pay grades based on years of experience? How do you move from one paygrade to the next and who determines?</p>	<p>Deputy Superintendent Dr. Rick Cruz Dr. Denise Watts Jharrett Bryantt</p>

WRITTEN RESPONSE:

- a. There is no policy or regulation that specifically states paraprofessionals are not able to cover classes on an “emergency basis.” The only stipulation, in policy, is providing instruction under the supervision of a certified teacher. There is also no specific guidance on defining how long a paraprofessional can cover a class. The coverage should be supervisory (not instructionally) and short term in nature.
- b. The Compensation Department is only aware of TA’s receiving a \$500 retention incentive that was given to all employees in the district. This stipend was board approved to be one-time and funded by ESSER.
- c. Pay grades are not based years of year experience; jobs are assigned paygrades based on duties, certifications, and other qualifications. An employee would have to qualify for promotion into a job at a higher paygrade to move paygrades. An individual hiring manager determines who is hired into vacant positions.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. Watts gave an overview of written response letter a, and Dr. Bryanntt gave an overview of written responses letters b and c.

Ms. Anderson said before changes were made, they were promised that the TA’s that worked in special contained classes would receive a \$500 stipend from the special education department. She said she was shocked to see that the compensation department was not aware of something that was promised to them in consultation.

Dr. Bryanntt said he was aware of these particular stipends but would commit to investigating the issue further and looping in the special education department and come back with a more elaborate response.

Mr. Dewey asked how does one move from midpoint to maximum within the same grade level.

Ms. Moore explained that when someone is hired into the district, their salary is calculated based on their years of experience; 2.5 % per years of experience with credit up to 10 years or a maximum of 25% on the minimum of the range. The only way to get increases while they remain on a job in that grade is through board approved salary increases.

Mr. Dewey said they were told in the past, years of experience had nothing to do with it and now years of experience does have something to do with where you get placed. He added that it makes sense if one continued to get more years of experience, they should have the opportunity to move to midpoint or from midpoint to maximum.

Ms. Moore said the years of experience were important when one applies for another job in a higher paygrade.

Ms. Anderson asked what jobs are available for a Teacher’s Assistant (TA) who want to make more money and they have 10 years of experience.

Ms. Moore said they are working on some recruiting programs for TAs that want to work on getting their teacher’s certification and depending on what career path one would want to take, there are several jobs with higher paygrades.

Dr. Cruz said as part of the strategic planning efforts, compensation is something they are looking very closely at and are committed to do so to ensure that they’re doing right by the employees and attracting the level of talent needed across all levels.

Mr. Dewey said we would always need good TAs and the only way for them to get a pay increase is to move out of a position they are good at that didn’t make sense.

Mr. Norris echoed what Ms. Anderson said about the special ed teaching assistants being promised a \$500 stipend. He suggested that the TA model classification be revisited by Compensation, so they won’t be locked in at a minimum wage. There should be some type of upward mobility for the teacher’s assistants.

Ms. Hilliard thanked the group and closed out the meeting.

Meeting ended: October 28, 2021, 4:01 p.m.

Recorder/Minutes: Blanca Saldana, Sr. Ex. Administrative Assistant