Consultation
A report on the December 2013 Consultation Meetings

Consultation is a structured process, outlined in SAISD Board Policy, which serves as a means by which the District consults with District employees on matters of educational policy and conditions of employment. The San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel is the organization elected by employees to serve as the Consultation organization. The Alliance Consultation Team meets with the SAISD Administration’s Consultation Team to discuss issues and work towards solutions. There is a Paraprofessional/Classified Consultation meeting and a Teacher/Professional Consultation meeting each month during the school year.

Support Personnel Unit

Lighting approved for safety of bus drivers

Lighting improvements have been approved to address the safety of district bus drivers. At the November Consultation meeting, the Alliance Team raised concerns about the lighting at the NAPA lot and the Austin St. entrance. Due to the time of day that the drivers report to work, appropriate lighting is vital. The administration followed up by taking a budget item to the school board for funding the lighting improvements.

Michael Sanchez, Executive Director of Plant Services, reported that they have already started taking bids for the lighting, but he did not yet have a specific timeline for when the lighting would be installed.

Duties impacting work of MS Data Clerks

The Alliance Team reported that the extra 15 minutes in the middle school day plus breakfast-in-the-classroom have resulted in data clerks being moved to cover the office while office personnel are covering morning duty. This is taking considerable work time away from data clerks to be able to meet their responsibilities, which impact district funding. The situation also impacts the customer service of both the data clerks and secretaries.

Toni Thompson, Assoc. Supt. for HR, noted that some flexibility may be needed, but said they have informed principals that data clerks should not routinely have to answer phones and be in the mainstream of the office. Mona Lopez, Asst. Supt. for MS, will do some follow up and discussion will continue at the January meeting.

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Intercoms for campus kitchens

There has been ongoing discussion about the need for intercoms in campus kitchens for safety purposes. Food Service personnel have asked how they would be notified when an emergency arises, such as a lockdown situation. Ideally, kitchen staff would be able to hear the intercom warning when the whole school is notified. However, there are still a few schools that do not have a working intercom system in the kitchen area thus leaving the kitchen staff exposed to the danger at large.

Sally Cody, Executive Director of Food and Child Nutrition Services, stated that some schools lack sufficient wiring to have intercoms and said new data lines would have to be laid, which would be costly. Toni Thompson will check with Marcos Zorola, Chief Information Officer, to get details to bring back to the January meeting.

Plant Operations administration suggested that the porters be the liaison to the kitchen staff in case of an emergency until a more permanent solution can be found. Porters will be notified of this new duty at their January training. For those campuses without porters, custodial staff will take on this responsibility.

In an effort to reach a viable solution, the Alliance has offered to sit down with Food Services and Plant Operations administrators to speed the process along. If you have any questions, concerns, or possible solutions, please call the Alliance at (210)225-7174.

Alliance’s 2013-14 Para/Classified Consultation Team

Shelley Potter -- President
Rachel Martinez -- Exec. Vice Pres.
Hilda Cantu -- Houston HS
Terry Armstrong -- Plant Svcs/Maint.
Jack Crum -- Beacon Hill/Kelly
Cheryl Solis -- Rogers MS
Catherine Rodriguez -- Jefferson HS

Teacher/Professional Unit

2014-15 Instructional Calendar

The administration presented two possible instructional calendars for 2014-15. One calendar has a 4-day Professional Learning Conference (PLC) while the other has a 3-day PLC with a follow-up professional learning day in October. The calendars follow the basic area-wide holidays similar to past calendars.

Employee and community polls will be sent out in late January with the goal of taking a recommendation to the school board in February. If you have any questions about the instructional calendar contact the Alliance office.

Discussion was also held about this year’s early release days and their impact on student attendance and instruction. Some administrators felt that instruction was almost non-existent on these days because the day is too compressed.

Recommendations were made that if the district were to keep the early release days, campuses could look at doing something quite different than on a regular school day (i.e., career day, target certain curriculum, cyber-bullying lessons, grade level rotations, etc.) to encourage attendance and student engagement.

District data reflected that attendance on the early release days was down slightly from the past two years but about the same as the two years before that.

Special Ed Task Force

The district Special Education Task Force, which was formed in response to the Alliance’s work on special education issues, has met twice so far this school year and has its next meeting set for January 27th.

At its December meeting, the group discussed required paperwork, communication with teachers, job descriptions and the distribution of responsibilities between Special Ed staff, and STAAR Alt.
Middle School “Flex” Period

The Alliance Team presented data from a recent survey of middle school teachers asking for feedback on use of the “flex time” that was instituted in district middle schools this school year.

Survey results showed:

- 57% of the 191 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the “flex time” period is being used as a timely and tailored intervention for students.
- 50% of the respondents reported that during “flex time” they are using a standard curriculum developed by a team of teachers.
- 55% of the respondents said there is no clear process for moving students into remediation or enrichment during the “flex time”.

Mona Lopez, Assistant Superintendent for MS, noted that campuses are responsible for providing a plan for the use of the flex time, and they must report at 3-week intervals on its effectiveness. The Alliance will share the campus breakdown of the survey results with Ms. Lopez so that she can determine what issues cut across all the campuses and which ones are campus-specific.

Discipline Task Force

The SAISD Discipline Task Force was formed last year as an offshoot of discussions in Consultation. Discussion this school year has been focused on discipline issues with Pre-K through 2nd grade students. The group met most recently on January 14th and examined the criteria for “expedited” RtIs. The topic of RtIs was also discussed at the Policy Review Committee meeting that same day. Both groups discussed the current obstacles to getting support for students with severe behaviors.

Some progress is being made and the meetings will continue. Alliance members needing support with individual situations may contact the Alliance office for assistance.

Bilingual Task Force

Last year and during the summer a group of Bilingual/ESL teachers met with Alliance leaders to organize and summarize a variety of issues. Gracie Oviedo, Alliance Executive Vice President, met with Rachel Cervantes, Sr. Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction, and Luz Garcia-Martin, Sr. Coordinator for Bilingual, over the summer to present the concerns.

At the December Consultation meeting, Ms. Cervantes reported that the district is initiating a review of the bilingual program. They have secured an independent consultant to do an external review. There will be interviews of teachers and administrators, a focus group, and curriculum, assessments and instructional data will be reviewed.

The department is also creating a district task force made up of teachers and administrators. Information was sent to principals to distribute to teachers, who could self-nominate or who could nominate others. The Alliance will also be nominating teachers from its Bilingual Task Force.

The overall goal of the work of the district task force and the external consultant is to provide recommendations for improving/transforming the Bilingual/ESL program into a high-performing program that serves our ELLs effectively.
Consultation Survey

As your elected Consultation organization, the Alliance would like to hear from you regarding what issues you feel are most important to address at our monthly Consultation meeting with the SAISD administration. You may answer the survey on this print copy and return it via “pony” mail to or you may complete the survey online at: https://leadernet.aft.org/webform/2014-consultation-survey.

1. What is the most important issue to address at our Consultation meetings?

______________________________________________________________________________

2. What is the second most important issue to address at our Consultation meetings?

______________________________________________________________________________

3. What is the third most important issue to address at our Consultation meetings?

______________________________________________________________________________

4. My campus or worksite is: ______________________________________________________

5. My job category is:
   □ Teacher  □ Other Professional  □ Paraprofessional  □ Classified

   Return to the San Antonio Alliance via “pony” mail by Friday, February 7, 2014.
   Thank you for your feedback!

Alliance Consultation Advisory Committees

The Alliance Consultation Advisory Committees (a Teacher/Professional CAC and a Support Personnel CAC) meet monthly to provide input to the Alliance Consultation Teams. The CACs help to: 1) prioritize issues and provide input on how to address issues, 2) develop possible solutions for issues, and 3) guide processes for gathering input on issues.

If you would be interested in serving on the Consultation Advisory Committee, please return this form to the Alliance Office via “pony” mail.

Name: __________________________________________ Best phone #: __________________

Campus or Worksite: ______________________________

I am in the: □ Teacher/Professional Unit  □ Support Personnel Unit

   Return to the San Antonio Alliance via “pony” mail.