

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: FILE

FROM: Jeffrey Thomas, Ed. D., Executive Director of Human Resources

DATE: May 17, 2016

RE: INVESTIGATIVE REPORT RE Follow-up from WIAA investigation regarding coaches _____

I. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT

Dr. J. Tim Mills, Superintendent of the Bellevue School District requested an additional inquiry into items identified in the WIAA Report on Bellevue Football conducted by Carl Blackstone and Robert Westinghouse. Specifically, I was asked to focus on three areas; 1) allegations that the head football coach "directed and encouraged football players to attend or take classes at the Academic Institute;" 2) that "District and BHS administrators and coaches cultivated a close relationship with the Academic Institute;" and 3) that "BHS Coaches received excessive payments for coaching high school football."¹

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- a. Who, what, when, where, how.
- b. Identify a reference after each statement of fact.
- c. Identify the credible evidence that supports the factual summary.
(Attach exhibits).

On April 25, 2016 I interviewed Victor "Butch" Goncharoff, head football coach at Bellevue High School. In this interview I asked Goncharoff ten questions aligned with the three areas of the WIAA report referenced previously. My summary notes of the interview indicate cooperation from Goncharoff (Exhibit A). Through correspondence with Goncharoff and his legal counsel, Malaika Eaton, Exhibit A is an agreed upon record between Goncharoff and the District.

On May 2, 2016 I conducted a follow-up interview with Goncharoff for additional information (Exhibit B). Goncharoff continued to be cooperative and openly answered questions (Exhibit B). The summary notes in Exhibit B are an agreed upon record between Goncharoff and the District.

On May 6, 2016, I interviewed Pat Jones, assistant head football coach at Bellevue High School. In this interview I asked Jones six questions based upon information

¹ The report and its Exhibits are several hundred pages long. Only specific pages of the report are included in this review. The report in its entirety is available with appropriate redactions. Carl Blackstone and Robert Westinghouse are the authors of the report and conducted the investigation on behalf of the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA).

I believe this allegation is unfounded. The WIAA Report based this assertion on a single email that did not include Goncharoff. The conclusion also failed to understand a coach's expected responsibility to be engaged in the academic success of students. The conclusion in the WIAA Report is in error. If the Bellevue School District supported coaches not being involved in helping students achieve Academic Success, there would be a failure in supporting one of our key instructional initiatives.

- 3) The allegation that "BHS Coaches received excessive payments for coaching high school football."

I believe there is a violation of Policy 5251, Conflict of Interest and Policy 2151, Interscholastic Activities and this allegation is substantiated. The conclusion is based upon the fact that Goncharoff and Jones both benefit financially either directly or indirectly as a result of their employment as coaches for Bellevue High School. I understand their belief that this arrangement had approval from district officials prior to 2012. This previous interpretation did not take into account legislative action in 2009 and the adoption of Policy 5251 in 2012. The evidence that the District took reasonable steps to educate coaches in 2014 and 2015 and the fact that both Goncharoff and Jones were in attendance at both trainings helps to solidify this point.

Based upon the WIAA Rules, any compensation greater than \$500 paid by any entity outside of the Bellevue School District for coaching activities would be a violation. Whether this amount is \$501 or \$60,000, the violation exists. This violation is predicated upon a clear blurring of boundaries between where the Bellevue High School football program ends and where the Boosters and Athletic Camps Northwest begin.

The problem, however, is greater than just citing a violation of Policy 5251 in this instance. By looking at the policy and providing a fair and equitable review of other coaches and programs, I believe this same policy interpretation and review of other programs in the District would render similar results in violation of Policy 5251. I do not believe coaches are willingly violating Policy 5251, but rather are basing their decisions upon an interpretation from 2007 that I believe no longer applied after 2012.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon my review, I make the following recommendations:

- 1) A systemic review of all high school athletic and activity programs that provide support through booster or other organizations be reviewed through the lens of Policy 5251 and WIAA Rules if applicable.
- 2) Consider compensation for coaches in football programs during the Summer Season. This will have a budget impact.