

Statement from Dr. Mills on WIAA Report

This is a somber day. In our service as educators we are fully committed to supporting and protecting our students. This belief is paramount in the work I do daily. We believe in our students and we strive to build partnerships with our parents in support of our students. We also strive to build positive relationships within our community based on trust and caring. I recognize that trust is shaken in times like this.

I want to acknowledge the unintended, but very real impact the WIAA investigation has had on individuals and members of our community. During the course of the investigation, concerns of racism in the investigative approach were issued, and members of the community called on us to halt the investigation. While we communicated these concerns to the WIAA, the investigation continued. As superintendent I am deeply concerned that my actions did not go far enough to support students who felt the investigation was racially biased.

It is clear to me that students and families have been hurt due to the investigation. I also understand that for many of our racially diverse families, the public discourse and concern of racial bias extends beyond the Bellevue High School football program and has caused pain to those not even associated with the program. To those members of our community I also want to extend my apologies.

The WIAA report obviously contains information that requires immediate attention. At the same time, there are areas that we will look into more thoroughly as recommended in the report.

We know how important athletics are to our students. We believe in the importance of fair play and rules. We are committed to working with the league and the WIAA as we move forward

Through the public records process the district is releasing a redacted copy of the WIAA report on the investigation. The public copy of the report is redacted so that the identities of former and current students cannot be easily identified. I feel very strongly that we should do everything we can to protect our students and see that they are not harmed as a result of this report. We have set up a dedicated email address – feedback@bsd405.org – that people can use on this specific issue and we will be reviewing everyone's input.

Included with our release is our initial response with comments and concerns about the investigation and report.

I do want to be clear that we take this report very seriously and we have the responsibility to offer a more detailed and specific response and appropriate actions in the next few days.

This includes a more detailed review of pertinent documents to determine if there were WIAA rule violations and the report of findings to the KingCO conference for review and action. This is according to WIAA rules.

In addition, I am committed to making every effort to rebuild divisions in the community where they exist and restore faith in leadership where there are doubts. I became an educator to make a difference in the lives of students. I believe in our students and know that as superintendent I have the responsibility to create an environment that allows each student to succeed. I take my responsibility very seriously, and recognize that I am accountable to our students, staff, parents and Board of Directors.

I realize that people will have strong opinions about the allegations, how the investigation was conducted, the actions of people that were investigated, the contents of the report, and what actions should be taken. I urge everyone to exercise restraint and respect for all members of our Bellevue community as we move forward. Over the next few weeks we will continue to communicate with the public on the progress of our next steps in this process.

Thank you.

Dr. Tim Mills

Superintendent

Bellevue School District