

Discussion Notes from Special Board Meeting
October 6, 2015

This is just an overview and synopsis of the discussion held. It is not meant to be a verbatim account of proceedings.

Public Comment:

Jay Fredrickson: 20 years in education, coaching for a longer period of time, policies change because they are ineffective, harsher penalty was not a deterrent, stair step policies (3 strikes/out), 2 game suspension is a big deal, a whole season or even a year can be crippling, zero tolerance is not best for kids, accept responsibility for not really studying new policy, parents/kids sign because they can't play if they don't, may not have understood real implications, have to have rules AND enforce them, will stand by whatever board passes

Rick Cummings: When did board give approval? Why didn't they? (not required) To do so in the future is probably best practice.

Darcy Schwindt: (coach's perspective) coaching since 1998, can remember one other time of policy violation, handled by previous consequences. (teacher's perspective) students would be dropped from other activities as well, repeat offense would be no big deal because they're already out

April Pepos: kids make mistakes, a year is a too long, two weeks may not be stiff enough, academic suspension is only 6 weeks, yes - MIP is a big deal, move back from 15-16 policy but amend to something harsher

Stormy Schwindt: former art teacher at Cascade School, daughter involved in incident, two week suspension is a nightmare to a truly committed athlete, community/school is a family

Barb Lynch: everyone seems to be caught up in the two week time frame, parents have to take control/responsibility for parenting, court experience was life altering, drastic change in policy should have been addressed by board, one week suspension has been like a death sentence

Kevin Sukut: coached football for 17 years, been back at Cascade for four years as an administrator, all of us have best interest of kids at heart, looked at policy several years ago, people had already been talking about leniency of policy, full year harsh but lessons need to be learned, small infractions can lead to greater violations, one year may be too harsh but two weeks is too lenient, policy is important to protect students, kids need to follow rules as well as laws, be mindful of precedent being set

Deanne Weickum: sports is secondary, under new policy students would also lose ability to participate in activities such as FFA, rules need to be established and followed, separate athletic suspension from academic choices, underage drinking is a big concern

Felicia O'Brien: hope board did homework in comparing consequences of previous policy with new, not a lot of love or encouragement given to return to participation, keep tiered interventions but take a good look at them, appreciate want to keep kids safe but don't lose sight of providing opportunities

Chris Riphenburg: reiterate what has been said, changes need to be made but one year is too harsh, hasn't seen and did not sign new form (student doesn't participate in fall sports), don't kick kids to the curb

Zaneta Riphenburg: academic policies in handbook, so should athletic policies be, small mistakes shouldn't limit opportunities

Karen Lappier: overview of procedure for policy review/approval, signed form to be able to participate, would deal with problem later (if it happened), no time given to look at other options for school attendance, according to American Psychological Association zero tolerance policies proved to have negative consequences, kids need to be judged for who they are not the single mistakes they make

Justin Barnes: policy created and sent out, no issues identified, sent to all coaches on staff, parents/students were given notice, no issues brought up at fall parent meeting, since coming to district major goals have been to raise the bar, two weeks may be a “slap on the wrist” but a year probably is too harsh, bad motion was made- looks like we’re changing the policy due to current situation, staff is required to sign handbook every year, do they read it thoroughly? Probably not, need a strong enough penalty to be a deterrent, have had issues with on site/off site violations, would a special meeting be called if Superintendent got a DUI? Would some other employee? Tonight is not the night to change policy, uphold now and look at changes later

Darcy Schwindt: (parent perspective) thanks for taking time out of busy schedules, important to understand that 14 day suspension isn’t all that is involved in tiered consequences, there are other steps that need to be addressed, read letter from state JMG

Board Discussion:

Rick Cummings: MTSBA suggested a couple of options - that we uphold policy and look at judgement on an individual basis (that would require a closed session for each student) or to step back to old policy and move forward in looking at changes

Deanna Hastings: received lots of calls, emails, letters in regards to situation, parent of JH student/athlete, policy change was sent by email to coaches at noon, brought up at 4 pm in coach’s meeting, and again at 6 in parent meeting, tiered system also include opportunity for community service, need to be careful of setting precedent as board to change policy every time there is something wrong, is tonight the best time to make changes with emotions running high?

Chris Boland: zero tolerance concept great, good kids make poor choices, humiliation is punishment in and of itself

Charlie Hawn: don’t agree with one year suspension but doesn’t agree with two weeks either, has been a longtime member of community

Erin Wombold: agrees with everyone, athletic suspension should be in line with academic eligibility guidelines, agree with a possible 30 day consequence

Terri Bogden: everyone is to blame, if given an agreement it should be review prior to signing and agreeing to it, should FFA/BPA (and other co-curricular clubs) kids be punished for athletic violations? Academic consequences should be just as strong if not stronger than athletics because we are ultimately in the business of educating kids, would a violation at home last as long as one imposed here?

Rick Cummings: in the event of alcohol being consumed on campus the school is legally responsible for actions from home to school and back to home, nine weeks provided academic possibilities even though they were not enrolled (expulsion), the district provides 5 different handbooks – Student, Certified, Classified, Athletics and Transportation, only Student Handbooks are legally required to have board approval every year, there should be no excuses made, need to take responsibility for not studying new policy, suspensions are for games, not practices, most coaches require full participation in practices, enforce or break policy but don’t change the policy mid stream, to avoid mistakes in future and ensure that good policy is made we need to have discussion and deliberation rather than always changing, go back to old policy and direct Superintendent and Activities

Director to look at viable changes, be more creative in discipline rather than using the same old way, Zero Tolerance doesn't work