

Athletic Task Force

August 20, 2018 – October 3, 2018

Summary of Meetings to Date

The Warren County School District administration was charged with developing an Athletic Task Force to review and make recommendations on the following:

Mr. Stewart asked administration to submit the athletics question, in general, to the PACCA Committee and asked the Committee to devise a process to seek input from students, coaches and other stakeholders as to alternative ways to increase participation and continue to study co-ops as an alternative so that the District does not get into the forced situation of having to shut down programs for lack of numbers.

The administration then requested that each athletic director and principal put together a team of six people comprising of coaches, community members, and parents from all four attendance areas. We have since conducted three meetings.

We put forth the following two goals for the team:

1. How can we increase participation in athletics in the Warren County School District?
2. How and when do we make plans to develop cooperative agreements among schools in the District?

Participation

We began by discussing participation in athletics and specifically why are students not participating. The following list of ideas were brought up as barriers to participation. In the second meeting we began by discussing which of these barriers we have control over and how we can possibly combat the barriers.

Social Media	No Control
Drugs in School	Administration is continually working with staff to monitor student behavior and identify when students appear to be demonstrating issues that disrupt their ability to function appropriate in school or school activities.
No Passion	Majority say yes. Group members felt that students and adults do have the ability to motivate students to participate. This in turn can have impact on whether a student develops passion for the particular activity. It was noted that having teachers as coaches greatly impacts this although coaches that are part of the community and regular visit the buildings can impact students also. Another factor mentioned was the ability for volunteers involved in the programs. It was noted that becoming a volunteer is much more difficult and time consuming than it used to be which impacts the ability to get volunteers.
Increase in Travel Teams	We have no control over travel teams. This has been a problem in the schools because travel teams hand pick the students that they want which often does not include all students that play in the school. Also, it becomes burdensome on the coaches in the school trying to run programs outside the seasons. It forces student choice. Students are now often times choosing to specialize in one sport where they used to participate multiple school athletic activities. The coaches in schools don't always work with one another to deal with the same students participating in multiple activities outside the season for that activity.

Lack of Teacher Coaches	We don't necessarily have the control to hire teacher coaches as we have in the past which was not always the best practice anyway. What we do control is some incentive monetarily to increase the number of teachers that would consider coaching.
Low Pay for Coaches	Most coaches do not do it for the money. We know that regionally we are below average for coaching salaries. The committee noted that most coaches start out very passionate about coaching but demands in time and issues with players and parents in particular begin to diminish the passion for coaching.
Sports Operate Year Round	Students playing multiple sports are practicing for one and playing another. The committee feels that schools should review the amount of time in off-season that students are participating in athletics. The decrease in enrollment and increase in demands to keep up with other programs outside the District has put more pressure on kids.
Transportation	The outlying areas feel this is a high need area. Not all parents can bring kids back and forth to the school for athletics. Combining sports is going to increase this problem unless some form of transportation is provided. The late bus does not aid with the later practices. The schools need to reach out to the parents and booster groups to address carpooling. Parents do not attend booster meetings where these kind of conversations can take place.
Fundraising Expectations	Fundraising has become too much on a yearly basis. One member of the committee has already had three fundraisers this year. One idea brought up was sponsorships from larger companies in the District. The District budget for athletics does not pay for all the coaches, transportation, and officials fees now. The schools are left to make up the difference. The businesses in town are not giving as much and economically disadvantaged families cannot pay the participation fee and many cannot do the fundraising. This decreases participation within families. Another factor was paying for sports physicals.
Economically Disadvantaged Numbers Increasing	We need to implement programming to ease the burden on some families.
Students not Willing to Sit on the Bench	When kids pay and then do not play it makes them not want to be there. Parents don't want to pay and not see their kids participate.
Students Working	Many student athletes work because they want material items like phones and cars.
Lack of Coaching Education	We need to do a better job educating coaches. There needs to be funding for coaches to go to clinics. Coaches are spending considerable time doing training for clearances but this does not pertain to the coaching of the sport or dealing with student athletes.
Student Athletes have Changed	As we continue to deal with reduction of numbers we have reached out to more and more students that are on the fence of whether they participate or not. Freshman are forced to compete with seniors.
The way student athletes are treated by coaches	It was brought up that the way in which coaches often relate or don't relate to student athletes makes a tremendous difference. Students don't want to be yelled at for instance. Many coaches coach the way in which they were coached and kids are different today. We need to educate the coaches on the best way to relate to student today.

In the third meeting we focused on activities that student partake in that are non-school related but provide competition for school related athletics. These are not to be viewed as negative in relation to the activities themselves but result in less participation in school related events.

- 4H
- Care, Ride, or Compete with Horses or Other Animals

- Caring for Siblings at Home
- Competitive Cycling / Moto-Cross
- Competitive Gaming
- Dance
- Fantasy Sporting
- Farming or Necessary Chores at Home
- Fine Arts Activities (Drawing, Painting, Sculpting, etc.)
- Four-Wheeling
- Gymnastics
- Hiking
- Homework
- Hunting / Fishing / Trapping
- Karate / Martial Arts
- Music – Formal School Related Band / Choir / Orchestra
- Music – Outside of School (Creating Music, Playing in a Band w/ Friends, etc.)
- Non-Competitive Gaming
- Online Coursework
- Running
- School Clubs
- Scouts
- Shooting / Trap Activities
- Skateboarding
- Sports – Non-School Related (golf, skating, road and mountain biking, skiing, etc.)
- Theatre / Musical
- Travel Sports
- Volunteering
- Working
- Working Out / Lifting
- YMCA Swimming

The committee agreed that many of these activities did not impact athletics in the District years ago. Many of the student athletes did not participate in them or they did not exist. Now student athletes that want to participate in those types of activities are made to make a choice and often do not select school sponsored athletic programs.

Another question that came up was knowing whether or not student athletes were ready to participate at higher levels. Since it has been brought up that using younger players to round out varsity numbers has caused issues with safety, it is relevant to discuss the promotion of student athletes especially freshman. Typically the coach and athletic director make a determination as to whether or not a student athlete is ready to play up. In some instances this is exacerbated by the number of players available as a whole. The expectations are lowered in situations where there are few athletes.

Andrea was asked to share information in the second meeting pertaining to the number of injuries that she has dealt with. She shared information related to the number of injuries that she has seen per attendance area. She stated that the numbers were very high for collision sports especially in areas where athletes were never off the field. Having only one athletic trainer was identified as a problem because she often can't get around to all the games and focuses on the collision sports first. Many injuries are going unrecognized unless the school nurse or coach notifies her. Having student athletes in year-round strength and conditioning programs would also help reduce injuries.

The final thought of the meeting was on offering quality opportunities as opposed to just an opportunity. In other words in some cases we are putting untrained athletes on the playing field which diminishes the opportunity for those athletes that take it very seriously and want a competitive experience and many who want the socialization of playing sports.

Cooperative Agreements

The committee discussed cooperative agreements in the manner in which it would provide an opportunity where there may not be one at all and it balances Title IX in a school. We agreed that co-op agreements will in most instances not increase the number of participants and in fact most student athletes will not continue to participate in a sport that has been chosen for a cooperative agreement with another school if they have to travel to the other school for activities.

Proactively deciding on the direction of cooperative agreements in the District means we have to work within the PIAA guidelines for determining cooperative agreements changes in classification. We have until the 15th of September, 2019 to determine, recommend, and approve any cooperative agreements that would change classifications for programs. It would then be forwarded to District 10 and the PIAA for final approval.

The committee members have many concerns regarding cooperative agreements:

- Will transportation be provided?
- Will it result in cost savings if transportation is provided?
- Will larger schools co-op at the smaller school in some instances?
- What will happen to the remaining programs at each school?
- Can a school get a program back once we establish a cooperative agreement?
- Many feel that successful programs should not be relocated to another school for the sake of a cooperative agreement
- Distance and time in travel remains one of the most difficult aspects of any recommended cooperative agreement
- Which school colors and name will be used in the cooperative agreement (location or larger school)?

The committee was asked to review a number of recommendations for cooperative agreements that have been made to the Board over the past several years. This is a proactive way of determining when and where cooperative agreements will be established in the future. The committee will then review and make a list of ways in which we can increase participation in school sponsored athletics.

At the beginning of the fourth meeting the committee discussed a handful of ways in which the schools could begin to increase participation such as the following:

- Win – Students want to participate in programs that are successful
- Get non-athletes to attend games to create a positive school environment
- Celebrate your athletes
- Market in your community
- Recruit in the hallway – Adults in the building need to actively recruit student athletes

Administration discussed the fact that the motivation for female versus male athletes to participate in athletics may be different therefore our approach may need to be different going forward. Administration shared information from a one particular article including the following:

Male and Females have Different Motivational Factors

Female motivation:

1. Physical health improvement
2. Fun/enjoyment

3. Muscle Improvement
4. Mood and stress coping
5. Appearance
6. Competence/skill
7. Weight management
8. Socializing
9. Competition/excitement

Male motivation: Revealed competition/excitement was the number one factor

Koivula, (1999) Sport participation: Differences in motivation and actual participation due to gender typing

The committee then discussed possible opportunities for moving forward. Administration reviewed the timeline for any decision making for cooperative agreements. We would have to have any recommendations approved and submitted to District 10 by September 15, 2019 for District and PIAA approval for play beginning in the fall of 2020. We would need to also continue to administer athletics in the meantime. Many examples of plans for forming cooperative agreements were shared prior to the meeting. Again, a concern for the committee is the message that we are trying to increase participation but cutting programming prior to or during this process. It was reiterated that administration understands this but at the same time we need a plan for when these programs are not meeting the minimum number and also want to provide an opportunity for some of the programs that are struggling with numbers to proactively plan for the future.

One of the committee members stated that before we discuss those options one idea we should consider is doing away with junior high sports, replacing with a middle level skill development program for all students, and having all 9th graders play a junior high schedule. There is data to support students regularly dropping out of athletics by the age of 13. While the committee saw this a positive step there is apprehension from coaches to cut junior high programming. One suggestion was that we look at maybe 5th and 6th grade and keep junior high intact or even extend into 7th grade but not into the 8th grade. Another concern was not having the available programs to compete against as 9th graders in District 10.

The committee then agreed to look at individual programs that are close to the minimum number and what numbers they currently have (fall sports) or are projected to have. We listed the following programs:

FALL SPORTS

School	Program	18-19	Min #	
SAMHS	Varsity Football	32	20	* 19 students from Sheffield
	Jr High Girls Basketball	11	10	*Need to review minimum for combined teams
YHS	Varsity Cross-Country	11	10	* Boys 7/Girls 3 - No junior high and (1) 9th grader
	Jr High Girls Basketball	10	10	*Need to review minimum for combined teams
EMHS	Varsity Boys Soccer	15	15	
WAHS	Varsity Boys Golf	10	6	
	Jr High Girls Basketball	14	10	*Need to review minimum for combined teams

WINTER SPORTS

School	Program	17-18	Min #	
SAMHS	Varsity Wrestling	20	10	* 11 students from Sheffield / 14 Weight Classes
	Jr High Wrestling	7	10	* 2, 6, 6 - In Previous Years / Probation 4 Years
YHS	Varsity Girls Basketball	10-13	10	
	Varsity Wrestling	10-12	10	* 14 Weight Classes

	Jr High Wrestling	4	10	* 5, 4, 7 - In Previous Years / Probation 4 Years				
EMHS	Varsity Girls Basketball	11-12	10					
	Jr High Wrestling	11	10	* 14, 7, 10 - In Previous Years / Probation 1 Year				
WAHS	Swimming		30	* 15 Boys/15 Girls				

SPRING SPORTS

School	Program	17-18	Min #	
SAMHS	Varsity Girls Track	8	15	* Combined boys/girls is 15 - Total is 30 right now
	<i>Need to discuss team competition numbers in track</i>			
	Varsity Softball	19	12	* 12 students from Sheffield
	Jr High Track	18	15	* 7 Girls/11 Boys
EMHS	Varsity Baseball	13	12	* 19, 14, 13 - In Previous Years

After reviewing the current or previous year's numbers for each one of the programs above the committee had a discussion regarding the minimum number that was previously set as the marker for determining probation or the possible recommendation for elimination of a program. Committee members had questions regarding some of the numbers and how they were determined. The committee also discussed the minimum numbers as they pertain to team competition. In other words in cross-country a minimum number of five places is used to determine a team score. We have had cross-country numbers below the team minimum with only three female competitors which means we cannot score an entire team. Wrestling was another area where the minimum number of 10 is below the number of weight classes (14) that compete in a match. Junior high basketball numbers were also discussed although some clarification will need to be made. It states on the handout to the committee that 15 is the minimum number as a combined junior high team, however, individually a 7th or 8th grade team can compete with a minimum number of eight students. This will need to be discussed at the next meeting. Also, junior high wrestling is low at two of the four schools and have been on probation for four years straight. It has been treated much differently than the other sports because there is very minimal cost due to transportation and participation at varsity matches. That will need to be discussed going forward.

Administration made the following proposal to the committee for review:

1. Principals and athletic directors need to have conversation with the programs above with minimal numbers to determine if they wish to proactively form cooperative agreements moving forward. They need to bring back any requests to the administration.
2. The committee will make no recommendation to develop cooperative agreements at this time. The focus of the work by the committee will be proactively increasing participation numbers in athletic programming.
3. Administration will continue to follow the current procedure for recommendation of programming moving forward beginning immediately with the following changes.
 - a. There will no longer be any probationary period. All teams that drop below the minimum number will be recommended for elimination.
 - b. If a team can continue to compete with numbers below the minimum they will be allowed to complete the season.
 - c. If a team cannot field enough student athletes to compete as a team they will be recommended for immediate elimination.
 - d. If it is recommended that a program be eliminated in a particular sport all consideration will be given to forming a cooperative agreement where applicable.

It was suggested by individual committee members that we consider the following amendments to the proposal:

1. Programs would be placed on one year of probation and in any subsequent year if numbers drop below the minimum number the program would be recommended for elimination.
2. Probationary periods be retroactive for programs that have previously been on probation.

Administration recommended that we begin the next meeting with determining the outcome of this recommendation and then we would spend the rest of the meeting focused on proactively working on increasing participation.

It was suggested by committee members that we plan to meet after each season throughout this school year to review the season and program participation and then meet in the spring to determine if we need to make any further recommendations moving forward. This would give us some time to begin implementation of strategies and also provide significant time to see how each season and participation numbers in particular end up.

The committee will reconvene in two weeks.

NOTE:

Administration was discussing the proposal above. Something to consider for the next meeting and deciding to move forward will be the approach to the elimination of a junior high program. This will obviously have direct impact on the long-term outlook for a varsity program.

At the last meeting of the athletic task force committee on October 3, 2018 we decided to recommend the following in regards to enforcement of minimum numbers for program participation:

- a. From this point forward, all teams that drop below the minimum number will be placed on a one year probationary period. In the event that the team drops below the minimum number in the future, the team will be recommended for elimination. Each team will only receive one probationary period.
- b. If a team can continue to compete with numbers below the minimum they will be allowed to complete the season.
- c. If a team cannot field enough student athletes to compete as a team they will be recommended for immediate elimination.
- d. If it is recommended that a program be eliminated in a particular sport all consideration will be given to forming a cooperative agreement where applicable.
- e. The minimum numbers will remain the same.
- f. In the event that junior high basketball has the minimum number of eight (8) players but less than fifteen (15) players they will only be permitted to play one junior high game per night. If the team has fifteen (15) or more than they will be permitted to play two games in one evening.
- g. Two junior high programs will have the minimum number removed. It was decided that junior high wrestling and cross-country do not cost the District any additional money and the programs are merged with varsity programs for travel, official's fees, and salaries.
- h. The task force will meet this year following the fall, winter, and spring seasons to review the participation numbers and make any follow-up recommendations.

It was also recommended that a subcommittee of the Athletic Task Force begin development of a District wide 5th and 6th grade athletic introductory program to increase participation numbers. It is also recommended that the District utilize the athletic pay to participate fees to fund this program. The target date for this programming would be the fall of 2019-2020 with the realization that this might very well begin in 2020-2021. The discussion centered on selection of a number of sports that would introduced to students and over a four or five week session District wide culminating in a District wide event for those participating. The committee would oversee the programming so that is was consistent across the District with help from the athletic directors and varsity coaches.

This would conclude the recommendations for the athletic task force until we meet again in the spring following the fall, winter, and spring athletic seasons.

Athletic Task Force

Board Members:

Elizabeth Huffman	WCSD School Board
Joseph Colosimo	WCSD School Board
Mary Passinger	WCSD School Board

Central Office:

Gary Weber	Director Support Services
Rick Gignac	Athletic Supervisor

Sheffield:

Glenn Smith	Building Principal
Corey Copley	Athletic Director
Tom Holden	Coach
Brandon Troutman	Coach
Jena Albaugh	Parent
Roger Dunham	Parent

Youngsville:

Amy Beers	Building Principal
Corey Copley	Athletic Director
Kevin Hoover	Coach
Scott Ishman	Coach
Andy Sveda	Coach
Carrie Hendrickson	Parent
Troy Weissinger	Parent

Warren:

Jeff Flickner	Building Principal
Jeff White	Athletic Director
Joe Errett	Athletic Director
Dennis Johnson	Community Member
Andrea Shene	Parent
Andy Techonchuck	Parent

Eisenhower:

Ericka Alm	Building Principal
Jim Penley	Athletic Director
Dave Allenson	Coach
Todd Venman	Coach
Wendy Trumbull	Community Member
Natalie Black	Parent