



WEST BLOOMFIELD
SCHOOL DISTRICT

GERALD D. HILL, PH.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

May 27, 2020

West Bloomfield School District Principals and Administrators:

You may be aware the Board received a complaint from the parent of a High School student who was seriously injured during an off-season baseball practice at a private facility. The District retained an independent attorney who conducted a comprehensive, confidential investigation. Based on that investigation, I made several recommendations, which the Athletic Director is in the process of implementing.

The implementation of these recommendations, in particular the decision to release the baseball coach, triggered a range of reactions from the community. Some of the reactions reflect a misunderstanding of the investigation (e.g., the investigator assumed everything the parent asserted was correct or the investigation was not accurate or complete). Others reflect misunderstanding of the scope of the District's responsibility for the manner in which extra-curricular activities are conducted and supervised (e.g., MHSAA rules and District guidelines do not apply to off-campus practices).

The attorney's report will not be released to the public because it falls within the scope of the attorney-client privilege. However, the following points summarize my conclusions and the collective conclusion of the Board. They also include some of the concrete steps the District will be taking going forward:

1. The investigation was handled properly. The investigation was thorough and resulted in appropriate conclusions and recommendations.
2. The District does not recognize a distinction between sports-related practices organized by District coaches based on: whether they take place on-campus or off-campus; whether they are mandatory or optional; or, whether they take place in-season or off-season. The District expects all practices involving District coaches will, for example, be conducted consistent with Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) rules and applicable District policies and guidelines.
3. The student's injury was an emergency and could have resulted in permanent injury or death. To date, the student has not been cleared to participate in sports-related activities. While it is not appropriate to reveal details about the student's injury; the District expects that anytime there is a question whether head trauma has caused a student-athlete to lose consciousness or become insensible, District coaches will call for an ambulance. Furthermore, any time a student-athlete is injured, the District coaches will promptly report the injury as required by District policies and guidelines.
4. It is not necessary to review the manner in which other incidents have been handled. However, if you are aware of similar incidents, you may let me know and the District will determine next-steps on a case-by-case basis.



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5. The District's Athletic Director will be proposing revision of District policies, procedures, and guidelines consistent with this letter for consideration and adoption by my office and, if necessary, the Board.
6. Releasing Mr. Birnberg was a very difficult decision. As you know, Mr. Birnberg graduated from the High School and was popular with his players and parents. However, these are not sufficient reasons to retain his services in light of all of the relevant facts.

Our obligations extend beyond the facts of this particular incident and the manner in which it affects one coach and one team. As District administrators, we are responsible for setting and enforcing expectations, policies, guidelines, and an atmosphere of accountability most conducive to student-safety and the goals underlying the District's extra-curricular programs. While we realize our decisions may not satisfy every member of our community; our actions must be tailored to improve educational and extra-curricular experiences for all District students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gerald D. Hill, Ph.D.
Superintendent