Addressing Supervision Structures for Athletics and Extracurricular Activities, Including Reporting Protocols for Bullying and Hazing

Summary of Findings & Recommendations from External Review of Montgomery County Public Schools

I.   PROCESS OF REVIEW*

- Interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, athletic directors, activity sponsors, coaches principals, district leadership and more.
- Convened a panel on hazing, bullying, and sexual assault prevention in athletics, which included both national experts and athletic coordinators from other large school districts in the region.
- A review of relevant documents and background materials.
- Benchmarked MCPS's existing policies and our recommendations against nationwide best practices.

*These findings and recommendations are necessarily limited. Interviews, focus groups, and case studies did not comprehensively address every school in the district.

II.   FOSTERING A POSITIVE CULTURE

Findings

- Overall, the reviewers found that MCPS has fostered a generally positive culture around athletics and other extracurriculars.
- The reviewers found no evidence that bullying, hazing, or sexual assault is currently widespread in athletics or other extracurricular activities at Damascus High School or the other schools we visited. *NOTE:* The reviewers did not perform a comprehensive, historical review of unreported incidents.
- Although familiar with bullying, students have less awareness of hazing.
- The tone set by administrators, athletic directors, coaches, and extracurricular sponsors critically impacts student behavior.

Recommendations

- Create in-person interactive hazing training and programming for student athletes and extracurricular participants.
- Create in-person interactive trainings and programming for athletic directors and administrators to train coaches and sponsors on preventing and responding to hazing, bullying, and sexual assault.
- Emphasize "tone at the top," as well as the importance of engaging students on bullying, hazing, and sexual assault, in trainings for administrators, athletic directors, *coaches*, and sponsors.

III.   IMPLEMENTING ROBUST SUPERVISION PRACTICES

February 2019 Supervision-Plan Requirement

Findings

- The supervision-plan requirement received mixed reviews.
- Supervision plans vary in quality.
- The most thorough and workable supervision plans were created through collaboration by all relevant stakeholders.
- Athletic directors and coaches requested feedback from administrators and MCPS's central office on their supervision plans.

Recommendations

- Clearly communicate that continuous, uninterrupted supervision of high school students is neither possible nor desirable.
- Supply practical guidance on best practices for supervision plans.
- Encourage collaboration among administrators, building services, security staff, and others in creating supervision plans.
- Provide schools the repairs and resources they need to ensure their supervision plans can work as designed.
- Review existing centralized administrative support for athletics and extracurriculars.

Additional Supervision Challenges

Findings

- Varied practice schedules leave a "supervision gap" between the end of the school day and beginning of practice.
- Increased use of in-school coaches could help mitigate supervision issues.
- Schools across the District reported similar needs for additional security personnel.
- Supervisory responsibilities often inadvertently fall on building services staff.
- Many students have difficulty leaving school immediately after practice and other after-school activities end.
- Supervision is further complicated by the use of campus facilities for Interagency Coordinating Board ("ICB") events.

Recommendations

- Consider increasing security staffing after school.
- Consider providing supervised spaces where students can spend the time between last bell and beginning of practice.
- Evaluate additional incentives for teachers to take on extracurricular sponsorship and coaching responsibilities.
- Consider expanding or shifting the activity bus schedules.

- Consider whether changes to existing positions and job descriptions can help mitigate the after-school supervision gap.
- Ensure that building services staff receive training reflective of their role as an integral part of after-hours supervision.
- Encourage schools to integrate athletic directors into administrative conversations around supervision and security.
- Work with ICB to ensure that existing policies for community use of MCPS facilities take into account student safety and supervision needs.
- Help schools develop methods to communicate ongoing issues about students to coaches and sponsors.
- When incidents occur, encourage prompt debriefings to reflect on lessons learned.
- Consider annual Board of Education briefings by select representatives from MCPS athletic and extracurricular programs.

ENSURING TIMELY REPORTING OF INCIDENTS AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

Findings

- MCPS has a robust set of district-wide regulations with respect to mandatory reporting requirements and procedures.
- Administrators and athletic directors understand their reporting obligations.
- Coaches and sponsors have a basic, functional understanding of reporting.
- Most coaches and sponsors assume that administrators bear the responsibility for completing Form 230-35.
- Students prefer less formal reporting mechanisms.
- Regulation JHF-RA does not discuss how a staff member or teacher should respond when a student does not want to make a formal report.
- Reporting and response protocols are less well-developed for incidents that occur after hours and require an immediate response.

Recommendations

- Encourage schools to develop a reporting protocol tailored for responding to incidents that arise after the school day ends.
- Ensure that all administrators and staff understand the obligation to report, including when a student expresses reluctance.
- Clarify the role of Form 230-35.
- Proactively gather information from students.
- Regularly review incident data to identify areas for improvement.