

Goffstown High School Athletics
Program Evaluation



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Goffstown High School Athletic Program Program Evaluation 2016

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Executive Summary

This report provides an evaluation and analysis of the athletics program at Goffstown High School for the purpose of determining what we do well, where we can improve and how to provide outstanding athletic opportunities for students and families. Methods of analysis included surveys of athletes, parents and coaches. A focus group comprised of administrators, teachers, coaches and Goffstown Outstanding Athletic Leaders (GOAL) student athletes contributed their perceptions of athletics at Goffstown High School.

This program evaluation highlights that participation in high school athletics is a positive experience for most students (93%) and most parents (85%), respectively, at Goffstown High School. Results of the data showed a general satisfaction with the athletics program among all constituency groups with a few noteworthy areas of improvement needed in equity and administration of the athletics program.

Strengths determined:

- Participation in high school athletics is a positive experience for most athletes
- Sportsmanship is emphasized
- Sports offerings are varied and appeal to a broad range of students
- Most students have the opportunity to participate in athletic programs
- Coaches teach positive values to athletes while developing individual skills
- Students have a very high regard for coaches
- Students have a great deal of pride in their athletic programs and are glad to be part of this “family”

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Recommendations include:

- Explore perception of issues of equity:
 - Program, gender
- Develop a mission statement specific to Athletics
- Develop guidelines for Booster Clubs
- Develop an ethics policy for any SAU, school district employees, or volunteers who have students in the Goffstown Schools or participate in athletics or other co-curricular activities

While student response to the survey was high (approximately 85%), discretion is necessary when viewing this report due to the limited number of responses from coaches and parents.

Introduction

Goffstown School District strives for continual improvement in all programs that impact students, both academic and athletic. Seeking continuous quality improvement and recognizing the need for on-going growth, this program evaluation focuses on the athletics program at Goffstown High School. Athletic programs offer a unique opportunity to support the academic curriculum in a setting outside of the classroom and are a valuable extension of the high school experience for a large portion of the student body. Supporting numerous goals, including, sportsmanship, ethical and socially responsibility, collaboration, communication, determination, hard work and perseverance, an athletic program is considered an integral component of high school for many students (Connecticut Association of Schools).

This program evaluation provided the opportunity to determine what we do well and to identify where improvements are needed. Through this process, we sought to learn how to better provide outstanding athletic opportunities for students involved in athletics and their families within our educational community.

This program evaluation was intended to study this broad question: Does the Athletic Program at Goffstown High School contribute positively to the education of its athletes? Additionally, we sought to determine program strengths and areas in need of improvement. Further, the following research questions were identified in the Athletics Program Evaluation Proposal (See Appendix A):

1. What does the Research show about best practices of high school athletic programs?
2. What are the strengths of our Athletic Program?
3. What are areas of growth needed in our Athletic Program?

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4. What are the perceptions of administration at GHS in relation to our Athletic Program?
5. What are our census data for our Athletics Programs at GHS – compilation of student participation data including gender?
6. How does the experience of home games for athletes and parents compare to away games – logistics, expectations, experience satisfaction?
7. What are the expectations and implications for athletes around vacations, Holidays, finals week, off-season workouts, etc. within our Athletics Program?
8. What are the perceptions of parents of our Athletic Program?
9. What are the perceptions of student-athletes of our Athletic Program?
10. How are coaches supervised and evaluated?
11. What are the perceptions of Booster Clubs of our Athletic Program?
12. Are the staffing levels of our athletic programs (AD and .5 administrative assistant) sufficient?
13. Do we have universal Program Guiding Principles for our Athletic Program that are known by all coaches, parents, and student athletes?
14. What are recommendations for our Athletic Program aligned with the Standards?

Program Model

The Connecticut Association of Schools: The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) provides a unique comprehensive assessment protocol for schools to utilize in an evaluation of their high school athletic programs. This model provides a set of tools (surveys, self-study checklists and self-study questions) based on their standards for exemplary interscholastic high school athletic programs to assist in a school's self-study. Given no such model in New Hampshire available through the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA), the Goffstown High School program evaluation is based on the CIAC model. The CIAC survey questions for athletes, parents and coaches, and the focus group materials served as our guide. A link to the complete Connecticut Association of Schools Standards document is included in Appendix B.

Overview of the Evaluation Plan

On April 18, 2016, Superintendent Brian Balke made a presentation to the Goffstown School Board proposing to conduct a comprehensive Athletics Program Evaluation of Goffstown High School. Superintendent Balke researched a comprehensive Athletics Program Evaluation Model and determined that the Connecticut Association of Schools, Standards of an Exemplary Interscholastic High School Athletic Program and Program Evaluation Model would be the best source to guide the implementation of this evaluation.

A planning meeting took place on May 23, 2016. Led by Superintendent Balke, a planning group (Frank McBride, Kim McCann, Steve Fountain, Kevin Farley, Joyce Lewis, and Athena Chisholm) met to discuss the specifics of implementing a student athlete survey prior to the end of school. It was determined that, time being of the essence, paper copies of the athletic survey would be distributed to students, rather than having them complete an online survey.

This group discussed the best way to get feedback from parents and coaches. It was decided that a parent survey (Appendix F), distributed via email prior to the conclusion of the 2015-2016 school year, would be the best option to capture the voice of the maximum number of parents. Coaches would also be given the opportunity to complete an online survey distributed through email (Appendix H).

This group further planned for the large group self-study component to take place during the summer and identified stakeholders for participation: administrators, GOAL student athletes, coaches, and teachers. July 20, 2016, was selected as the date for the focus groups to tackle the self-study questions suggested by the CIAC.

Data Collection Methodologies

Using the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) standards survey questions as a model, Brian Balke and Athena Chisholm determined the best questions to include on the Goffstown Student Athlete, Parent and Coach Surveys. A copy of selected survey questions was sent to high school administrators for review. Input was offered. The surveys were finalized and prepared for distribution.

Parents were notified via email that the survey would be given to student athletes prior to distribution (See Appendix C). On Friday, May 27, 2016, hard copies of the student surveys were distributed in homeroom. They were made available the following week to students who were absent. Completion of the surveys was voluntary – those who wished to complete them did so, and those who did not had that option. No personally identifying information was collected from the students. All student surveys were collected by homeroom teachers and kept confidential in large envelopes. 411 survey responses were collected. Athena Chisholm entered all student responses into Survey Monkey (online survey software). A copy of the student survey is available in Appendix D.

A parent/guardian survey was created using Survey Monkey and was available online to parents from June 16, 2016 to June 29, 2016. Parents were notified via email that their input would be greatly appreciated (see Appendix E). All responses were collected anonymously. During this two-week time period, 165 parent surveys were completed. Parents who had more than one child participate in sports or who had a child or children participate in more than one sport were invited to complete the survey more

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than once. This allowed parents to voice opinions about more than one child's experiences or experiences of one child in more than one sport.

The coaches survey was also created using Survey Monkey and was distributed via email to coaches on June 21, 2016. Data was collected until July 5, 2016. Twenty (20) coaches responded to this survey. A copy of the coach notification (Appendix G) and survey (Appendix H) are attached.

A focus group comprised of student-athletes, coaches, teachers and administrators met on July 20, 2016, at Goffstown High School. Participants were divided into 2 groups for discussion of the five standards outlined in the CIAC self-study model. The groups discussed the CIAC checklist and self-study questions in each of the following five standards:

Standard I: Program Guiding Principles

Standard II: Program Curriculum

Standard III: Program Resources and Equity

Standard IV: Program Administration

Standard V: Program and Player Evaluation

This group as a whole offered input into Standard I, and then were divided into groups. Group A worked through Standards III and V; Group B discussed standards II and IV. At the completion of discussion, each group shared highlights of its discussion with the whole group.

Literature Review

This Literature Review was included in the Goffstown High School Athletics Program Evaluation to consider what current research is available around best practices in high school athletics. All research used for this section of the Athletics Program Evaluation are peer-reviewed journal articles. Unlike a traditional scholarly literature review, the research findings have been kept in statement form rather than written into traditional paragraphs. The intent of the author was to make reading and considering the research findings more accessible. The complete reference page is contained within the Appendices.

General research findings:

Research finds that athletic programs result in reduced discipline problems, increased academic achievement, and higher graduation rates (Smith, 2016).

The health benefits of high school athletics programs are well-established including decreased risk of disease and overall improved mental well-being (Dohle & Wansink, 2013).

Numerous benefits are associated with participation in extracurricular activities (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015).

Research by Felfe, Lechner, & Steinmayr (2016) finds positive and robust outcomes for student athletes on school performance and peer relations.

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Dohle & Wansink (2013) studied adults in their 70's and found that participation in a high school varsity sport was the strongest predictor of health later in life including fewer visits to the doctor.

Afterschool activities participation is shown in the research to correspond to greater overall satisfaction at school, lower dropout rates, and better career prospects (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015).

Research across many disciplines (education, psychology, evolutionary biology) has demonstrated the benefits of focusing on and building on strengths; such activities increase overall competence (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

Sports have long shown to be a benefit for kids promoting health, cognitive development, motor skills, and pro-social behavior (Bradley, Keane, & Crawford, 2013).

An athletics program strength is seen through the comprehensive approach used to develop life skills and values as well as coaches' ability to foster relationships (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

Athletics are a successful setting to teach values and character development because student athletes are motivated to engage in sport (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

To promote health later in life, schools should maintain or enhance their athletics programs even in an era of shrinking school budgets (Dohle & Wansink, 2013).

Character development:

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Research has shown that an athletics program can be purposely designed to integrate teaching ethics, character development, and life-skills through a sports program (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

High school sports programs should support positive growth and development of student athletes (Camire, 2014).

Camire (2014) recommends that highly effective high school athletics programs focus on the following elements: supportive relationships, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts.

Athletic programs with a “win at any cost” attitude reflect values that run contrary to our goals in education and may limit student learning and personal development (Gayles, Rockenbach, & Davis, 2012).

When athletes or coaches misbehave in the social settings, academic settings, or athletic settings, confidence in the positive outcomes of athletics erodes (Gayles & Hu, 2009).

Athletics promotes social adaptability (Rees & Sabia, 2010).

Camire & Trudel (2008) find in their research that the majority of student athletes identify that social character best describes what they experience in their own development through athletics participation.

There is a significant positive relationship between athletics and interpersonal intelligence development (KUL, 2015).

Schools and coaches need to be purposeful to build character development into athletics programs (Camire & Trudel, 2008).

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Athletics benefits student athletes by teaching and increasing general levels of teamwork (Yeung, 2015).

Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu (2016) found in their research that former athletes exhibited more pro-social behavior than non-athletes later in life.

Coaches focus on the development of life skills through various teaching and coaching strategies and focus on two reasons: the needs of the athletes and the values of the coaches (Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Students who participate in athletics and extracurricular activities have a greater sense of belonging at school over non-athletes (Knifsend & Graham, 2011).

High school after school programs, including athletics, enhance social outcomes (Holstead, King, & Miller, 2015).

Camire & Trudel (2008) caution athletics programs to be specific and tangible when developing character building experiences for high school athletes; young adults often do not understand broad concepts such as morals or character development.

Students who participated in athletics have better relationships with their parents and are more generally less depressed than their peers (Diego & Sanders, 2001).

Increased achievement:

High school after school programs, including athletics, enhance academic outcomes (Holstead, King, & Miller, 2015).

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Higher academic achievement is associated with participation in after school activities (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015; Bradley, Keane, & Crawford, 2013; Felfe, Lechner, & Steinmayr, 2016; Diego & Sanders, 2001; Fox et al., 2010; Holstead, King, & Miller, 2015; Knifsend & Graham, 2011; KUL, 2015; Rees & Sabia, 2010; Seow & Pan, 2014; Smith, 2016; Yeung, 2015).

Despite the fact that student athletes have less time to study, participation increases student motivation, teaches teamwork, and self-discipline, all which have positive academic outcomes (Rees & Sabia, 2010).

In addition to academic improvements, athletics also develops leadership, time management skills, and organization skills and increases achievement in the classroom (Yeung, 2015).

There are associations between participation in extracurricular activities and student educational outcomes (Shulruf, 2011).

Studies show that student athletes have higher aspirations for college (Rees & Sabia, 2010).

For both boys and girls, research shows that student athletes have higher GPA's (Fox et al., 2010).

Grades and in school and positive behavioral reports are outcomes of participation in athletics (Felfe, Lechner, & Steinmayr, 2016).

Students who participate in athletics and extracurricular activities have higher GPA's and engagement in school in 11th and 12th grade (Knifsend & Graham, 2011).

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Student-athletes participating in individual and team sports promote personality characteristics and academic achievement (Bradley, Keane, & Crawford, 2013).

Positive relationships between increased physical activity and higher grades are found in research (Fox et al., 2010).

Athletics are seen to increase a student athlete's overall functioning by teaching life skills, values, and ethics (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

Research positively connects participation in athletics with significant effects on the verbal/linguistic and bodily/kinesthetic components of a student athlete's overall intelligence (KUL, 2015).

However, athletics can be a negative experience where athletes are taught to lie, cheat, be dishonest and to just focus on winning (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

In addition to higher academic achievement, research has also linked high school athletics to later in life volunteerism and charitable giving (Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, 2016).

Participation in athletics is shown in the research to relate to higher status careers for former athletes (Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, 2016).

Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, (2016) found that participation in competitive youth athletic programs appears to correspond to characteristics that positively benefit former athletes when they are in the workforce.

High school athletics benefit self-esteem and improve educational aspirations (Smith, 2016).

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Student access:

Participation in school athletics are negatively impacted by school structure; this includes school culture and relationships with faculty (McNeal & Storrs, 1999).

Parent income is a predictor of athletics participation but can be offset by school climate and the relationships within the social milieu (McNeal & Storrs, 1999).

Ashbourne and Andres (2015) claim that parent income levels and education can predict a student's participation in after school activities including athletics and specialized programs. A rich, robust athletics program that is available and promoted to all students can help equalize opportunity for all students

Within the research on afterschool activities, it is common to not separate out athletics, leadership opportunities, music and the arts, etc. (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015).

Diego & Sanders (2001) found that students who exercised more used drugs less frequently; providing access to athletics to all students have positive benefits.

Former athletes have higher expectations for leadership, self-confidence, and self-respect from employers when former athletes are adults (Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, 2016).

It is important for schools to connect at-risk youth to programs such as athletics (Knifsend & Graham, 2011).

Research suggests that athletes have higher incomes later in life (Rees & Sabia, 2010).

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For student athletes who aspire to play their respective sport the top three reasons for selecting their institution of higher education were: perceived play time immediately, financial aid, and perceived future playing opportunities (Schneider & Messenger, 2012).

Supervision and evaluation of coaches:

Research indicates that some coaches have very specific strategies on how to promote positive youth development while some struggle in developing this positive youth development (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

Policy makers, administrators, and parents need to support coaches in teaching and holistically developing student athletes as more important than winning (Baltzell et al., 2014).

Supporting coaches helps increase coach happiness and reduce coaching turnover (Baltzell et al., 2014).

Coaching is a vastly complex activity and coaches come to the job with varying levels of understanding and experience (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014; Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012).

High school athletics are increasingly competitive; conflict between parents and coaches is becoming more prevalent (Miller et al., 2006).

Miller et al. (2006) note that parents have an increasing belief that they can have regular, inappropriate contact with coaches that go considerably beyond the parent's original intent.

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In our win-at-all-costs society, we often blame coaches for focusing too much on winning; research shows that coaches place a high value on the holistic development of student-athletes over winning (Baltzell et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2006).

Outstanding coaches want to take care of their athletes both on and off the playing field (Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012).

Among the challenges of running athletics program is recruiting, supervising, and retaining high-quality coaches (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

Research indicates that many coaches do not seek to provide guidance and direction to athletes where values, life lessons, and positive experiences are valued (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

Research shows that effective coaches stress effective communication, consistency, and character (Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012).

Miller et al. (2006) found in their research that winning was not the most important factor for a coach to keep their job but rather poor management and ineffective communication were the primary reasons a coach was dismissed.

Coach professional development:

Facilitating positive youth development is a complex process that develops over time for coaches; coaches need to expand their own learning and growth through formalized and informal training opportunities (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

Formal and informal opportunities to learn and grow are important for coach development (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

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With the impact that coaches have on student athletes, it is imperative to hire, train, and retain quality coaches (Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012).

Coaches can extend their own learning by participating in learning communities centered around athletics and coaching topics (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

Coaches can continue to grow and develop by expanding their skills in leadership, organizing and planning, being a knowledge seeker, being compassionate, and a reflective practitioner (Miller, Lutz, & Fredenburg, 2012).

Experience and education are the keys to developing positive experiences for student athletes (Camire, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014).

An athletics program strength is seen through the comprehensive approach used to develop life skills and values as well as coaches' ability to foster relationships (Camire, Trudel, & Bernard, 2013).

Professional development for coaches can lead them to be better prepared to teach character development and life skills (Trottier & Robitaille, 2014).

Budget/Policy:

Policy changes in athletics rarely involves looking at research and using research to guide best practices (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009).

Research has proven that athletics has positive outcomes for student athletes; as such, policy makers need to ensure that appropriate budgets, policy, and systems are in place to promote athletics (Felfe, Lechner, & Steinmayr, 2016).

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Athletic programs need appropriate funding to adequately sustain programs (Hagedorn & Horton, 2009).

Harvey, Koller, & Lowrey (2014) recommend a four-stage process to consider athletics policy changes: engagement (key stake holders, elected officials, experts, etc.), enactment (public engagement and outreach to interested groups), research (review of current research to inform policy making), and reform (making policy and system changes to improve athletics).

Nationwide, budget cuts have impacted high school athletics programs with negative consequences (Holstead, King, & Miller, 2015).

Consideration should be given by policy makers to expand athletic programs as a means to improve educational outcomes in a school (Smith, 2016).

At a time when school budgets are being cut, it is important for policy-makers to ensure that participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities continues (Knifsend & Graham, 2011).

Knifsend & Graham (2011) found that participation in extracurricular activities including athletics improves school connectedness and should be a priority for school budgets and policies.

Although athletic programs are often thought of as too costly, research shows that interscholastic participation may be among the answers to educational reform (Smith, 2016).

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Major national policy reforms largely ignore the benefits of athletics on school improvement and largely ignores the use of athletic programs as essential components to student interventions (Smith, 2016).