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3D Coaching

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Addressing the Sports Culture at Staunton High School

As part of my course in 3Dimensional Coaching, I recently sat down to interview Mr. Brett Allen, principal of Staunton H.S. in Staunton, IL. Mr. Allen’s primary responsibilities are the education and safety of students at SHS, but he is also in charge of recommending coaches to the school board. (Note: SHS employs a teacher to serve as athletic director for a stipend. However, he serves only in a scheduling capacity and has no official role regarding coaching hires/evaluations.).

Staunton High School has several obstacles facing its athletic program, some of which are prevalent throughout the country. First, it is hard to find coaches to fill open positions. For instance, there were no candidates to serve as golf coach this past season, so the athletes were responsible for their own transportation and competed as individuals. Other jobs have stayed open past the original deadline because nobody applied for the position. In fact, the school board recently overturned a policy that only teachers could coach, now allowing community members the opportunity.

Another obstacle facing the district is understaffing. There is a current teacher shortage and budgetary issues in Illinois. As a result, in my tenure as a teacher at the school, our staff has shrunk from 83 teachers to 67. Our demographics have also changed, with the low income rate rising from 18% to 40%. As such, everyone is taking on more responsibility on a daily basis, making athletics a secondary thought for most.

Finally, I perceive a weakness in the sports culture at SHS. Although there have been recent successes in select sports, for the most part our teams have struggled to compete. Whether that is a result of being the smallest school in the conference, poor coaching, lack of talent, etc. is up for debate. However, a divide between parents and coaches has emerged, though this issue is likely not unique to Staunton H.S.

Despite the challenges we face, there are a few strengths worth mentioning. First, the coaches seems care deeply about their players and go the extra mile to help them achieve, both on and off the field. Furthermore, sport offerings and participation levels are high despite the small size of our school. Finally, our community seems to rally around programs when resources are slim. As a result, teams generally have the funding and equipment they need to compete.

Given the aforementioned analysis, I would recommend the following changes to the sports landscape at SHS. First, require that coaches attend at least one clinic each year, reporting back on what they learned and how they intend to implement their knowledge. Second, require each coach to attain 3Dimensional certification in order to better address the 2nd and 3rd levels of the program (Note: Mr. Allen is interested in more information on 3D certification). This initiative would go a long way toward player development while also addressing the current rift between coaches and parents.