3-D Coaching Interview with Norwalk Middle School AD

Zach Lipovac

Norwalk middle school is in the process of re-writing their mission statement. Zach Lipovac shared with me the rough draft of the proposed mission statement, which is “to help make better student/athletes that will contribute productively to society.” Mr. Lipovac seeks out coaches that are going to have positive relationships with student athletes. Ideally, they would have content knowledge of the skills of the sport they are coaching, but feels that comes secondary to the positive influence the coach can have on his/her student athletes. Mr. Lipovac has an evaluation system in place, and all middle school coaches are evaluated every three years. He also checks in with all his coaches weekly about practice and competitions. In the state of Iowa coaches either have a coaching endorsement attached to their teaching license or they take classes and get a coaching authorization. If a coach has an endorsement, the renewal process is met when they renew their teaching license. If they have a coaching authorization, they must take 6 credits of classes to renew their authorization. Some of this can be renewed when they take online meetings. Norwalk also provides and pays for opportunities for coaches to go to clinics, which will offer recertification credit. Coaches also must be CPR certified and take concussion protocol every year before their season starts.

When talking the three dimensions of coaching, Mr. Lipovac says that much of that is put on by the head varsity coaches. The head coach is expected to give his/her vision of the program, specific skills/fundamentals/ and culture. That vision is then implemented by the lower level staff, 7-12. The head varsity coach has different tiers for each grade level of what specifically is focused on developing. Each grade level builds on each other. Each coach designs their own way to distribute this information and how exactly they implement it. Some ways include leadership council, squads, and book studies.

This program is very strong because Mr. Lipovac gets to know his coaches and communicates with them clearly and regularly what the expectations are. Improvements could be made by bringing all coaches in to see what each program is doing, as some coaches are better at expressing their vision to lower levels than others. Overall Mr. Lipovac has protocols in place to meet the mission statement of “to help make better student/athlete that will contribute productively to society.”