Many factors will impact a school districts approach to providing educational athletics. However, I believe it should never impact its purpose. After discussing the Lake Mills Athletic Department with secondary principal Jim Scholbrock, they have a solid foundation on which to continue to grow. I will summarize my interview by discussing each of the 3 dimensions and how Lake Mills works to apply each dimension.

1st Dimension: The coaching staff is given great opportunities to grow in this area. All 7-12 grade coaches are provided paid clinics that they may attend each year. This is a great incentive. The department also allows coaches to use budgeted funds to purchase videos and other needed tools that help them advance in their knowledge of skills and drills. Coaches meet on a regular basis to cover the skills and drills of each sport and related athletic department issues. One area of concern is that often the district has open positions and are forced to hire coaches, mainly lower level staff, who are not as prepared to deal with 1st dimensional aspects as the head coach desires. Their rural location and a lack of open teaching positions play into this issue. Iowa has a coaching licensure requirement and this helps give coaches a basic foundation entering a position.

2nd Dimension: In the last 8 years Lake Mills has worked hard to improve in this area. They have brought in professional speakers from around the country and have created yearly coaches in-service activities to help coaches in the 2nd Dimension. They have added a contracted athletic trainer that also focuses on 2nd dimension issues with students and staff. Lessons related to modeling appropriate interactions with parents, officials and athletes have been incorporated. The focus of the staff has been to work together on the purpose of educational athletics and come together to promote involvement to increase participation for the betterment of the individual student and not the individual sports.

* One recent addition to the department’s growth is the use of NFHS courses that focus heavily on the 1st and 2nd dimensions. Coaches are allowed to take these course and the department will cover the cost of any expenses related to a course. Courses can be sport-specific or relate to any number of issues such as dealing with parent’s, teaching leadership skills, mental training and many more. The weakness centers on the number of coaches able to fit these courses into their plans. More incentives or a stronger focus should be made.

3rd Dimension: As a district Lake Mills has worked hard to focus on the heart of each adult that we have working with students. This may be the area in which the athletic department may be at its weakest in educating and supporting coaches. Too often coaches meetings focus on the administrative duties of coaching and not enough on the 2nd and 3rd dimension. The focus going forward will be to work on 3rd dimension aspects as a staff at their monthly staff meetings.