



YARMUTH WILSDON PLLC

**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
RE: BELLEVUE HIGH SCHOOL
FOOTBALL PROGRAM**

**VOLUME 1
REPORT**

**Carl
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into question its standing as a high school that actually provided an education for its students, or at least for those playing football at BHS. Finally, the article raised questions regarding financial incentives paid to either recruit or retain football players to attend Bellevue High School.

In response to this article, the District requested that WIAA undertake an investigation.

V. INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS – MATTERS THE DISTRICT REQUESTED THAT WIAA INVESTIGATE

As explained above, the District requested that WIAA investigate five issues that generally fall into two broad areas: the residency of players as it affects eligibility and the Academic Institute's relationship with the BHS football program. We address each of these five issues and set forth our findings seriatim in sub-sections A and B below. We also explain, when relevant, the obstacles that we faced in pursuing the facts with respect to each issue. These obstacles included the initial refusal by the District to provide us the players' addresses we had been asked to investigate and the more recent claim by the District that relevant information regarding addresses used by players at registration had been destroyed. We also briefly discuss other issues related to the use of the Academic Institute by BHS coaches to help football players remain academically eligible in this subsection. We address additional violations of WIAA rules established by our investigation in Section VI of this report.

This report is the product of our investigation, which consisted of more than 100 interviews and the review of thousands of pages of documents.¹⁶ In the following pages we set forth the factual underpinnings of each of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

A. Issues Related to Residency

1. Background

a. The Residency of Players as it Affects Eligibility

Over the years, numerous football players have transferred to BHS both from high schools within and from outside the District.¹⁷ Players who transfer within the District must either use the open enrollment process¹⁸ and be accepted at their school of choice; apply to

¹⁶ We have decided not to attach a list of the witnesses we interviewed because several witnesses requested that we keep their identity confidential due to their fear of retaliation.

¹⁷ The Bellevue School District has four high schools: Bellevue High School, Interlake High School, Newport High School, and Sammamish High School. Bellevue High School generally serves West Bellevue. As explained above, in 2006 Karin Cathey identified at least 30 BHS football players who did not live in the BHS attendance area. (Exhibit 24).

¹⁸ The Bellevue School District utilizes an open enrollment plan for students. Students may apply during an open enrollment period, typically from mid-January through mid-February, to attend any high school within the District. If space is available the student will be placed at his/her school of choice. If a student is accepted into another school, he or she is not required to live within the BHS attendance area. In some instances, a high school is closed to open enrollment because it is at capacity. In other instances, a high school may receive open enrollment transfers on a "one-in, one-out" basis. If more students seek to transfer into a high school than space allows, a lottery system

transfer for cause,¹⁹ or establish residency in the geographic area served by BHS. Players who transfer from outside the District must either utilize the inter-district transfer process – requiring both the school district from which the student is transferring and the Bellevue School District to agree to the transfer – or move within the BHS attendance area.²⁰ The players are not permitted to live alone but must reside with their family or legal guardian within the attendance area. A student who attended a District high school for his/her first two years, is “grandfathered” into that school for the final two years, even if the family moves outside of the school’s attendance area. If a student attended a District high school for some portion of his/her first two years, the student can apply for permission to remain at the high school even if the family moves out of the school’s attendance area, but there is no automatic right to remain.

The District is obligated to determine whether a player transferring to BHS is complying with the residency requirements. When we first met, John Harrison assured us that the District thoroughly investigated players’ addresses. He told us, in fact, that he expected athletic coaches to determine that a player was actually living at the address he provided as his residence. Contrary to Mr. Harrison’s assurance, however, Coach Goncharoff told us that he makes no effort to determine whether a player is living at a particular residence, stating he relies on the BHS administrators to determine if a player is eligible to play. Neither he nor members of his staff undertake any efforts to verify a players’ residence.

BHS Assistant Head Coach Pat Jones also denied ever being told by John Harrison to check where players were sleeping. Indeed, he cited an incident approximately ten years ago when the District was required to pay damages for an overly aggressive “bed-check” as a reason that coaches did not check on the residences of players.

Glenn Hasslinger, District Supervisor of Pupil Management, was the District administrator primarily responsible for student placement from September 2005 until October 2015. He advised us that prior to the fall 2013, he occasionally went to the residence of a student to verify that he actually lived at the reported address. He recalled one such visit during the 2005-2006 school year and a second visit to a residence of a basketball player more recently. In the fall 2013, he was instructed by Shawn Lewis, the District Deputy Superintendent at that time, to stop making such visits because Mr. Lewis claimed they were “a waste of time.” He made no further visits to verify a student’s registration address.

is used to select which students seeking admission pursuant to the open enrollment plan will be allowed to enroll in a particular high school. From 2005 through 2014, according to Glenn Hasslinger, Bellevue High School was operating on a one-in, one-out basis for open enrollment. He does not recall a student seeking to enroll at Bellevue High School under this plan ever being denied admission.

¹⁹ A student who seeks to transfer for cause must first have his/her application approved by an administrator at the school that the student should attend and then by an administrator at the school of choice.

²⁰ Regardless of whether the student, who had begun high school other than at BHS, transferred to BHS utilizing the intra-district open enrollment process or transferred to BHS from another district, they would be required to sit out of varsity athletics for one year unless they were able to demonstrate the transfer was made necessary because of some hardship.